

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, December 19, 2008

The President's Radio Address

December 13, 2008

Good morning. This week, our country received good news in the fight against illegal drugs. New data show that illicit drug use amongst young people continues to decline, and that we are making good progress in our efforts to help thousands of Americans renew their health and hope.

Substance abuse is a serious challenge for our Nation. Addiction breaks hearts, destroys families, and keeps our citizens from fulfilling their God-given potential. The drug trade also enriches our enemies and brings crime and violence to our streets. So in 2002, I committed our Nation to an ambitious effort to cut drug use by limiting demand, reducing supply, and helping addicts get treatment.

Over the past 6 years, we've made great strides toward these goals. Parents, teachers, mentors, and counselors have done fantastic work to educate children about the dangers of drug abuse. Law enforcement officers have risked their lives to cut the supply of drugs on city streets. And with help from our international partners, we're pursuing drug dealers around the world and interdicting supply before it reaches our shores. This year, the Coast Guard took possession of more than 360,000 pounds of South American cocaine—an alltime record.

To help Americans break the chains of addiction, we've built strong partnerships with faith-based and community groups. These groups open minds and change hearts in a way no government bureaucracy can, so my administration has supported their life-changing work. Through our Access to Recovery program, addicts receive vouchers they can redeem at treatment centers of their choice, including faith-based centers. So far, this program has helped more than 260,000 addicts along the path toward clean lives.

Taken together, our efforts to reduce demand, cut supply, and help people break the chains of addiction are yielding measurable results. Over the past 7 years, marijuana use by young people has dropped by 25 percent. Methamphetamine use by young people is down by 50 percent. And the use of cocaine, hallucinogens, steroids, and alcohol by America's youth are all on the decline. Overall, illegal drug use by Americans is down by 25 percent, meaning we have helped approximately 900,000 young people stay clean.

These statistics reflect successful government policies. They also represent the courage and compassion of Americans who are determined to help their fellow citizens win their struggle against drugs. On Thursday, I met with some of these people at the White House, and I am inspired by their stories.

I was especially interested in a young man named Josh. At age 19, Josh had never touched drugs or alcohol. He had a promising life and career ahead of him. Yet after a car accident left him injured and unable to work, Josh started abusing alcohol and cocaine. He put his marriage and career in jeopardy. Eight different treatment programs failed to turn his life around, but the intervention of his grandmother, the support of his wife, and the loving influence of God did. Today, this young man is free of drugs. He's a caring husband and father. And Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers is one of the best players in Major League Baseball. More importantly, he and his wife Katie make time to share their blessings. Through their ministry, they're helping other Americans avoid the suffering their family endured.

Josh Hamilton shows that the devastation of drug addiction can happen to anyone, but that with faith and determination, anyone can turn a life around. So today I ask every American with a drug or alcohol problem to seek treatment, because your life is precious to the people who love you. Our Nation needs

your contributions, and there is a more hopeful future ahead. I ask all Americans to reach out to your neighbors in need and do your part to help our Nation win the fight against illegal drugs.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:55 a.m. on December 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Jalal Talabani of Iraq in Baghdad, Iraq

December 14, 2008

President Talabani. Today we have the pleasure and honor of receiving our great friend for Iraqi people, President George W. Bush, who helped us to liberate our country and to reach this day, which we have democracy, human rights, and prosperity gradually in our country. Thanks to him and to his courageous leadership that we are here now in this building.

So we are very glad really to have him with us, and we discussed with him all our problems very frankly and friendly. And we hope that we will continue friendship with him, even he'll be back in Texas.

President Bush. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you and the Vice Presidents for greeting me. I've known these men for a long time, and I have come to admire them for their courage and for their determination to succeed. I am also here to herald the passage of the SFA/SOFA as a reminder of our friendship and as a way forward to help the Iraqi people realize the blessings of a free society.

And the work hasn't been easy, but it has been necessary for American security, Iraqi hope, and world peace. And so, Mr. President, thank you for your friendship, and thank you for your hospitality. I'm looking forward to meeting all the folks who are involved in the political process—leading this political process. And I am just so grateful

that I had a chance to come back to Iraq before my Presidency ends.

President Talabani. You are welcome.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Talabani. They want a picture with you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Oh, absolutely.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:01 p.m. at the Salam Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Presidents Tariq al-Hashimi and Adil Abd Al-Mahdi of Iraq. The President also referred to SFA, the strategic framework agreement; and SOFA, the status of forces agreement.

Remarks at a Signing Ceremony for the Strategic Framework Agreement and the Status of Forces Agreement and an Exchange With Reporters in Baghdad

December 14, 2008

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. I would like to welcome the President of the United States, President George W. Bush. I would like to welcome you here as a guest of Iraq. You have stood by Iraq and the Iraqi people for a very long time, starting with the—getting rid of the dictatorship, to fight—helping the Iraqis to fight terrorism.

Your visit today to Iraq, Mr. President, comes after the signing of the agreement between the two countries, which represents the solid foundation and draws a roadmap that will govern and guide the relationship between the two states.

I believe that Iraq, we have performed and have done great work in a cooperative and integrated way in fighting terror. We have succeeded in Iraq, and we hope that efforts also around the world will succeed in defeating terrorism.

Today, Iraq is moving forward in every field. Through the new Iraqi political system, we are working very hard through this, as well as developing the Iraqi economy, and reconstruction of Iraq. We are doing all of this in order for Iraq to restore its rightful place among nations and among the world, and away from the previous reckless policies

that focused on wars with the previous regime.

The various political institutions have taken a very strong leadership positions, and the agreement was ratified, was approved by our political system, our Parliament, and various institutions of the Iraqi Government. They have approved and ratified the SOFA agreement and the withdrawal of American forces. We believe that these efforts culminated the height of real understanding and cooperation and friendship between Iraq and the United States. Now remains the part of implementing such an agreement. Now we are in the process of forming the proper committees that will carry out all elements of the various two agreements that were signed, and I'm referring to the various fields, military, scientific, educational, commerce, as well as economic fields.

President Bush, you have played a very supportive role in achieving and concluding this agreement. And prior to the actual date of starting to implement this agreement, January 1st, '09, we already start working through the United Nations Security Council. We are in the process of drafting a resolution that will make it very clear that Iraq no longer represents a threat to world peace and security. And also a resolution that will set the basis for the protection of Iraqi financial capabilities and bring Iraq back to its rightful place among world communities.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you, Mr. President. Once again, I wish you a very joyful stay here in Baghdad and a safe trip back home.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your kind invitation and your hospitality. I also want to thank the Presidency Council for their hospitality as well. And I'm looking forward to some food. *[Laughter]*

I am also looking forward to signing the joint statement here affirming two landmark agreements that solidify Iraq's democratic gains, that recognize Iraq's sovereignty, and that puts the relations between our two countries on a solid footing today and a solid footing tomorrow. They cement a strategic partnership between our two countries, and they pave the way for American forces to return

home, as the war in Iraq approaches a successful end.

The strategic framework agreement formalizes a relationship, as it says in the agreement—formalizes a relationship of friendship and cooperation between our two countries' economic, diplomatic, cultural, and security fields. Under this agreement, we will work together to bring greater stability to Iraq and the region, as well as promote trade and investment between our nations. We will work to strengthen democratic institutions.

I'm sure you can remember what life was 2 years ago. When we were working together during that period such an agreement seemed unimaginable. Chaos and violence were consuming Iraq. The terrorists were seizing new ground, and the Iraqi people were beginning to divide the Iraqi people along sectarian lines. But you were determined, and I was determined, to do something differently, not to allow Iraq to fall into civil war.

And our plan is working. You notice I say "our plan." Today, violence is down dramatically. Al Qaida is driven from its safe havens. Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds are sitting together at the same table to part—to peacefully chart a—the future of this country. There is hope in the eyes of Iraqis' young. This is a future of what we've been fighting for: a strong and capable democratic Iraq that will be a force of freedom and a force for peace in the heart of the Middle East; a country that will serve as a source for stability in a volatile region; a country that will deny a safe haven to Al Qaida. As a result of these successes, Mr. Prime Minister, the American people are safer.

We're also signing a security agreement. The agreement provides American troops and Defense Department officials with authorizations and protections to continue supporting Iraq's democracy once the U.N. mandate expires at the end of this year. This agreement respects the sovereignty and the authority of Iraq's democracy. The agreement lays out a framework for the withdrawal of American forces in Iraq, a withdrawal that is possible because of the success of the surge.

These agreements result from careful consultations with the Prime Minister and the

officials of Iraq, as well as our diplomats and our military commanders. They represent a shared vision on the way forward in Iraq.

The American people have sacrificed a great deal to reach this moment. The battle in Iraq has required a great amount of time and resources. Thousands of our finest citizens have given their lives to make our country safer and to bring us to this new day.

We also praise the thousands of the coalition forces that came and the sacrifices that those countries have made. And the Iraqi people have sacrificed a lot. They've suffered car bombings and suicide attacks and IEDs, and desperate efforts by terrorists to destroy a young democracy. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have stepped forward to defend this democracy, and many have paid a dear price.

With these agreements, Mr. Prime Minister, we're honoring the sacrifices that I just described in the best possible way, by building a freer and safer and more hopeful world. By signing these agreements we're showing the people of Iraq the United States of America keeps its word. And we are showing the people of the Middle East that America stands firmly for liberty and justice and peace. And we are leaving the next President with a stable foundation for the future and an approach that can enjoy broad bipartisan support at home.

There is still more work to be done. The war is not over, but with the conclusion of these agreements and the courage of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi troops and American troops and civilian personnel, it is decisively on its way to being won.

Shukran jazeelan.

[At this point, Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zaidi shouted in Arabic and threw his shoes at President Bush.]

President Bush. All I can report is that it was a size 10. [Laughter] Yes. Okay, everybody calm down for a minute. First of all, thank you for apologizing on behalf of the Iraqi people. It doesn't bother me. And if you want some—if you want the facts, it's a size 10 shoe. [Laughter] Thank you for your concerns; do not worry about it.

U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Iraq/Status of Forces Agreement

Q. A question, Mr. Prime Minister and others, you all talked about the various gains that will come as a result of signing this agreement. But just quickly, I have one question about the withdrawal of American forces. Is this going to be an accelerated process that will happen quickly and perhaps prematurely?

President Bush. First of all, we're here at the request of the Iraqi Government, an elected government. There are certain benchmarks that will be met, such as troops out of the cities by June of '09. And then there's a benchmark at the end of the agreement.

As to the pace of meeting those agreements, that will depend of course upon the Iraqi Government, the recommendations of the Iraqi military, and the close coordination between General Odierno and our military.

Look, these are very important agreements, and the Government of Iraq worked very hard to get them through the Parliament. You want—okay.

Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Audience Disruption/Strategic Framework Agreement/Status of Forces Agreement

Q. Sir, a man just threw his shoes at you—

President Bush. The what?

Q. Sir, a man just threw his shoes at you, and it appears that there are terrible roadside bombings—

President Bush. So what if a guy threw a shoe at me?

Q. But you are also here to talk about progress and to mark progress with an agreement like this. And the kind of security gains you talked about. Do you consider this a victory lap?

President Bush. Right. No, I consider it a important step in—on the road toward an Iraq that can sustain itself, govern itself, and defend itself.

But let me talk about the guy throwing the shoe. It is one way to grab—gain attention. It's like going to a political rally and having people yell at you. It's like driving

down the street and have people not gesturing with all five fingers. It's a way for people to draw, you know, attention; I don't know what the guy's cause is. But one thing is for certain: He caused you to ask me a question about it. I didn't feel the least bit threatened by it. These journalists here were very apologetic; they were—said, “This doesn't represent the Iraqi people.” But that's what happens in free societies, where people try to draw attention to themselves. And so I guess he was effective, because he caused you to say something about it.

Now, in terms of the agreements, this is a major achievement. Is it the end? Absolutely not. There is more work to be done. And all this basically says is we made good progress, and we'll continue to work together to achieve peace. That's what we want: freedom and peace. And so, no, I'm honored to be back here. It's my fourth visit to Iraq and—as a sitting President, and I have been looking forward to this visit. It's very kind of you, Mr. Prime Minister, to have invited me here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. at the Prime Minister's Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and President-elect Barack Obama. Prime Minister Maliki and a reporter spoke in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Camp Victory in Baghdad

December 14, 2008

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. There you go. Thank you for coming out to say hello. General, thank you for the introduction; I am honored to be at Camp Victory.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Laura and I have been having a lot of Christmas parties at the White House, so I thought it would be kind of neat to change the scenery.

I would rather be with the men and women of the United States military than with anybody else.

So as you can see I decided to fly over, and in the spirit of the season we renamed Air Force One to “Rudolph One.”

Thanks for coming. I bring greetings from a proud and grateful nation; Merry Christmas to you, happy holidays. Congratulations on your inspiring accomplishments here in Iraq. And above all, thank you very much for volunteering to defend our country in a time of danger.

This is a time of year to give thanks for our many blessings. And the greatest blessing we have is freedom and the fact that we've got a United States military to defend that freedom.

So, General, thank you very much for your leadership. I'm proud to be with you again. I appreciate the leadership of General Austin as well. Ambassador Crocker and Christine are with us today. I had the pleasure of meeting Sergeant—Command Sergeant Major Lawrence Wilson, Command Sergeant Major Joe Allen, Major General Hammond—

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Put it together for Hammond. [Laughter]

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Command Sergeant Major Gioia—

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. There you go. Major General Oates; have you ever heard of—how about, have you ever heard of a guy named Redmore?

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. There you go. Thanks for coming out. I am thrilled to be here with the diplomats and Embassy personnel that are so critical to our success.

I want to thank the Iraqi citizens who are here with us today. I appreciate your courage. I know there are members of the coalition who are here with us. There have been a lot of troops from around the world who have come to help this young democracy survive and thrive. And so I want to thank the citizens of those country and the troops who have served here before us.

This is my fourth trip to Iraq, and you've probably heard I'm heading into retirement—[laughter]—so it's going to be my last trip as the President. But thanks to you, the Iraq we stand in tonight is dramatically freer, dramatically safer, and dramatically better than the Iraq we found 8 years ago.

And as a result of the sacrifices of our troops, America is safer, and America is more secure.

I want to take you back to what life was like 8 years ago here in Iraq. Iraq had a record of supporting terror, a record of developing and using weapons of mass destruction, was routinely firing at American military personnel, systematically violating United Nations resolutions. Life for the Iraqi people was a nightmare, with Saddam Hussein torturing and murdering anyone who did not support his repressive rule. Iraq was a sworn enemy of the United States at the heart of the Middle East; the region was a serious threat to us.

After the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, America concluded we could not tolerate a regime like this in a pivotal region of the world. I gave Saddam Hussein a chance to peacefully resolve the question as to whether or not he had weapons of mass destruction. You might remember, I went to the United Nations, where the—that body said, “Disarm, disclose, or face serious consequence.” It was his choice to make, and he made the wrong choice. And so the United States military, with a vast coalition removed this man from power, and the world is better off for it.

Audience members. Hooah! U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. I doubt in his worst nightmares, he ever would have dreamt that we'd be standing in one of his palaces.

Thanks to you, 25 million Iraqis are free. Thanks to you, Iraq is no longer sponsoring terror, it is fighting terror. It's making American people safer as a result.

The enemies of freedom in Iraq are determined, and this fight has been tough. Two years ago, the situation had grown dire; the political process was frozen, and sectarian violence was spiraling out of control. Some of you were here then. Many said the mission was hopeless; many called for retreat. Retreat

would have meant failure, and failure is never an option.

So instead of pulling troops out, we sent more troops in—called the surge. And because of you and because of your courage, the surge is one of the greatest successes in the history of the United States military.

Terrorists who once held safe havens across the country are being driven out of their strongholds. The political process that was once stalled is moving forward. Iraqi citizens once afraid to leave their homes are going back to school and shopping in markets and leading a more normal life. And American troops are returning home because of success.

The dramatic turnaround you led in Iraq culminated in two agreements completed last month, which the Prime Minister and I affirmed in a ceremony earlier today.

These agreements formalize the ties between our two democracies in areas ranging from security and diplomacy to culture and trade. These agreements show the way forward toward a historic day, when American forces withdraw from a democratic and successful Iraq, and the war in this land is won.

There's more hard work to do before we reach that day. But if there is any—but if there is no doubt—but there is no doubt in my mind, there's just no doubt that we're going to reach that day. I am confident because our cause is just and freedom is universal. I'm confident because the Iraqi people are showing unshakable determination and courage.

And above all, I am confident because I know the character and the strength of those who wear the uniform of the United States military.

Over the past 5 years, you have shown the world some unmistakable truths. You have shown that when America is tested, we rise to meet the test. You have shown that the desire for freedom is more powerful than the intimidation of terrorists. You have shown that there is no task too difficult for the United States military.

And so I have a message for you and all who serve our country: I want to thank you for making the noble choice to serve and to protect your fellow Americans. Sometimes it can be hard to tell when history is being

made, particularly if you're in the middle of the action. What you're doing in Iraq is as important and courageous and selfless as what American troops did in places like Normandy and Iwo Jima and Korea. Your generation is every bit as great as any that came before it. And the work you do every day will shape history for generations to come.

I guess what I'm telling you is, your grandchildren some day are going to say, "Thank God you showed up and served."

America now has a strong friend and a partner in the fight against extremism in the heart of the Middle East, and that is historic.

People across this troubled region of the world now have an example for a more hopeful path, a model of liberty that can prevail over tyranny and terror. Killers who wanted to take the lives of Americans back home have been brought to justice before they reached our shores.

Because of you all who worked to protect this Nation—and all who work to protect the Nation, America has done something many said was impossible: We have gone 7 years without a terrorist attack.

We think of those who have laid down their lives for freedom here in Iraq. Their children are growing up without a mom or a dad. But all the—of our children are growing up with something else: the promise of a safer America and a better world. And that is the lasting memorial of all who have sacrificed here in Iraq. And thanks to you, that memorial will be achieved, and their sacrifice will not be in vain.

We think of your comrades who have been wounded. And this Nation pledges that we will give them all the care and all the support they need to recover.

We think of all your families back home. I know many of you have a sweetheart who misses you, or a daughter who longs for her dad, or a mom who worries about you day and night. For many of you, it won't be your first holiday away, and that certainly doesn't make it easier. So I'm going to give you an order: When you get out of here, call home or e-mail home; you tell your families you love them; and you tell the Commander in Chief came by to thank them for their sacrifice along with yours.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Thanks for coming by to let me say hello. Thanks for serving the United States of America. They ask me what I'm going to miss as the President. I'll tell you what I'm going to miss: being the Commander in Chief of such a fabulous group of folks. May God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 p.m. at Al Faw Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq, who introduced the President; Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, USA, commander, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; Christine Barnes, wife of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker; Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Wilson, USA, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen, USA, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, USA, commander, Multi-National Division—Baghdad and 4th Infantry Division; Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, USA, Multi-National Division—Baghdad and 4th Infantry Division; Command Sgt. Maj. James W. Redmore, USA, Multi-National Division—Center; Maj. Gen. Michael Oates, USA, commander, Multi-National Division—Center; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Interview With Members of the White House Press Pool

December 14, 2008

Audience Disruption at the Signing Ceremony With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq

Q. Quick ducking there, sir.

The President. I was worried about you. I thought you were going to have a heart attack.

Q. I thought I was too. [Laughter] I'm with you on that.

The President. Okay, my opening statement: I didn't know what the guy said, but I saw his sole. [Laughter] You were more concerned than I was. I was watching your faces.

Q. I saw something black and round go by my face.

Q. Just to see that—

The President. —his first—other than shoes. [Laughter]

Q. —to duck. [Laughter]

The President. I'm pretty good at ducking, as most of you will know——

Q. You were quick.

Q. ——ducking——

The President. I'm talking about ducking your questions. [*Laughter*]

Q. So you weren't a lame duck. [*Groans*]

The President. That bad? You know, I—look, I mean it was just a bizarre moment, but I've had other bizarre moments in the Presidency. I remember when Hu Jintao was here. Remember we had the big event? He's speaking, and all of a sudden I hear this noise; had no earthly idea what was taking place, but it was the Falun Gong woman screaming at the top of her lungs. It was kind of an odd moment.

Questions? We're going to Afghanistan now, in case you hadn't been told. You probably thought we were going home, but, no. Then we're going to go to—never mind. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, not to belabor the point too much, on this man, but I have a serious question about it. Obviously, he's expressing a vein of anger that exists in Iraq, and——

The President. How do you know? I mean, how do we know what he's expressing? Who——

Q. We had a translator who said he shouted about the widows and orphans.

The President. I don't know. I've heard all kinds of stories. I heard he was representing a Baathist TV station. I don't know the facts, but let's find out the facts. All I'm telling you, it was a bizarre moment.

Q. I wanted to ask something broader.

The President. I don't think you can take one guy throwing shoes and say this represents a broad movement in Iraq. You can try to do that if you want to. I don't think it would be accurate.

Q. Well, then, separately from him——

The President. That's exactly what he wanted you to do. Like, I answered on your question, what he wanted you to do was to pay attention to him. And sure enough, you did. Now, look, I'm not suggesting you can't avoid it. But it——

U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Iraq/ Progress in Iraq

Q. Well, how do you—how well do you think Iraq will transition from U.S. forces moving out of cities, pulling out, taking over——

The President. Well, obviously, I think it's going to be that the gains we have made are strong enough to accept the movement of troops into—out of cities into bases by June of this year. But more importantly, that's what General Odierno thinks is possible.

Q. ——at this point about when you look at Iraq, and you still have over 140,000 troops. What are the challenges you see?

The President. I think the challenges—many of the challenges are political. In other words, the first big challenge is to have Provincial elections that enable people to vote and feel a part of the system, followed by national elections. That's a challenge. This is a challenge, however, that the Iraqis have met before. And obviously, you know, like the SOFA debate, it was a challenge to get SOFA through the—and SFA through the Council of Representatives because of the politics. But nevertheless, they came together.

Young democracies, when they debate big issues, sometimes can be strained. For example, there's a big debate going on between the central Government and the Provincial governments. But we went through the same debates ourselves. And as the society matures, they're going to be able to handle these debates in better fashion. So one of the important things was the success of the SFA/SOFA.

I remember the headlines: falling apart; may not make; confident it will happen; not confident it will happen. I mean, there was a lot of different opinions about whether or not this would eventually happen. And one reason why is because many of the people from the outside covering the debate on the inside were perplexed by the politics that was going on. But this is a democratic society. So I think the political process will be a challenge.

Progress in Iraq

Q. Sir, you got your first look at a part of Baghdad that wasn't the green zone and

wasn't a military base. What did you think of it?

The President. You know, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio], look, I can't look at a stretch of road and draw a conclusion. I can only really react to what the people who have been here for a period of time tell me. And I mean, the statistics tell you one thing. Obviously, when you look at the violence chart, it's down. But what's more important from my perspective is: Can a government meet the needs of its people? Can they get beyond differences and come together and meet the needs of its people? As well as: Are the Iraqi forces becoming more capable of providing more security? Is command and control structure better? Are the training missions better? Are they able to move from point A to point B in a way that is—enable them to have successful missions? When there's actionable intelligence, can they move?

And when you couple that with a political process that is relatively new compared to older democracies and the need to provide basic services for its people, one of the things that struck me was not the road, but was the amount of electricity there was inside Baghdad. It looked like a pretty well-lit city.

The other thing that struck me was, there was a lot of activity on the ground. Now, you got to remember, my frame of reference is different from you all, you who have been there. I saw a lot of kids playing soccer; I saw a lot of activity, a lot of street activity on the route we took. And General Odierno said a while ago that wouldn't have been the case.

U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Iraq

Q. You've always urged patience in withdrawing troops, coming out; you move slowly on that based on conditions on the ground. Now you're talking about within 6 months, that we'll be drawing combat brigades from the city.

The President. Cities, right.

Q. Do you think that the Iraqis are ready to step up to that now? Do you think that there are flaws or there—not flaws, but potential conflicts—

The President. First of all, I strongly objected to a politics timetable. The debate over the timetable of withdrawal was a—was

one that was unilateral in nature proposed by people who didn't think we ought to be in Iraq in the first place.

Secondly, I agreed to the terms of the SOFA because General Petraeus and General Odierno said that these terms are reasonable terms, and that is, we'll be moving troops out of cities into bases, close by to help if need be. Just because a troop is on a base doesn't mean that that troop won't be available to help the Iraqi forces. So they've come to the considered judgment that in the cities, the Iraqis are capable of providing security.

There is a plan in place that has been executed—successfully executed—that now the Iraqis can assume and continue to fulfill. That's a lot different than it was 18 months ago, when the plan was on paper and hadn't been executed yet. And so there's been a model for success.

Presidential Transition/Iraq Policy/ Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA)/ Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)

Q. Is that what you meant by a bipartisan foundation now looking ahead to the next Presidency?

The President. I meant by a bipartisan foundation that the debates on whether or not it was the right thing or not are past; the need to make sure that we continue the successes can be a bipartisan—can be bipartisan and should be bipartisan.

President-elect Obama has now got a seasoned general in Baghdad with a SFA/SOFA agreed to by the United States and Iraq, and by the way, has been kept abreast upon election about what the SOFA—or the SFA/SOFA means.

And one of the challenges for the Iraqis is going to be—for the U.S. is to get up to our committees and get working on the SFA, which we're going to do. Part of my mission here was to remind the Iraqi Government that there is still a lot of work to be done on SFA/SOFA; our embassy agrees with that as well. And that—but I also told them that I—that our transition is going to be a seamless transition, and that—I'm never going to put words into President-elect Obama's mouth, but by the decisions he made with Secretary Gates, for example, I believe he

understands the strategic importance of Iraq. And now he's got a framework from which to make decisions.

National Economy/American Auto Industry

Q. Mr. President, Iraq is obviously a big concern for Americans, but the economy seems to be even more of a concern. The automakers are in dire straits. How soon do you think your administration will be coming out with its plan for emergency aid? And are you leaning towards dipping into TARP to help—

The President. No question that the economy is number one on people's mind, and it should be. We're in a recession. These are serious economic times. People are concerned about their jobs; people are concerned about their value of their 401(k)s. This is a very difficult period.

We took note that there was a majority in the House and the Senate that voted for a package for the autos that would have caused them to begin to show how they're going to be viable. In other words, I have made this statement that given the status of the financial system, an abrupt bankruptcy for the autos could be devastating for the economy. And therefore, we've tried to work with Congress to accomplish the objective of not cratering the economy as well as making sure good money doesn't go after bad.

So we're now in the process of working through with the stakeholders a way forward, and we're not quite ready to announce that yet.

Q. Do you have any timetable, though, that you're looking at?

The President. Obviously, we're—this will not be a long process because of the economic—the fragility of the autos.

Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP)

Q. And, sir, are you leaning towards using the TARP money?

The President. I signaled that that's a possibility.

Press Secretary Dana Perino. You guys have 8 minutes left. You're going to Afghanistan. You might want to ask—

Q. —talk about it.

The President. Is that where we're going?

War on Terror in Afghanistan

Q. I think so. That's what you said. And I trust you with that. Can you tell me what—define the mission of the troops going in there in January and those who Secretary Gates wants in by the summer, the additional—

The President. The mission we had before, which is help this young democracy develop the institutions so it can survive on its own; to not repeat the mistakes of the 1980s, which is achieve an objective and leave, and deny a safe haven for Al Qaida.

Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News] asked me the question about the conditions in Afghanistan. No question, the violence is up. But one reason why the violence is up is that we're now putting troops into places where there hadn't been troops; begin to press these guys in places where they hadn't been pressed.

Just like the surge. You might remember, violence went up when we went into Iraq with more troops. And so the objective is to provide enough security so that a political system can develop that will be a—provide a stable platform for economic viability, and get a good education and good health.

Now the degree of difficulty in Afghanistan is high. This is a significantly larger country than Iraq and significantly poorer. The infrastructure is difficult. But nevertheless, the mission is essential; and that is, we cannot achieve our objective of removing Al Qaida safe havens by kicking out Taliban and saying, "Okay, now let's leave."

And so I recognize we needed more troops. You know, President-elect Obama is going to be making decisions on troops, and we've been calling upon our NATO allies to put in more troops. One of the things that when—was barely noticed was the quiet surge in Afghanistan. We had kind of level platform of troops; then we moved in quite a few number and so did our NATO allies. And now there's going to be—ramp up some more.

Pakistan/War on Terror in Afghanistan

Q. In Pakistan, I know that there are plans being worked up that combine—that you have to look at Pakistan and Afghanistan as

the problem. Can you talk a little bit about that?

The President. Obviously, if Pakistan is a place from which people feel comfortable attacking infrastructure, citizens, troops, then it's still going—it's going to make it difficult to succeed in Afghanistan. That's why we're working with the Pakistan Government to keep the pressure on the extremists. And the more that we can get Pakistan and Afghanistan to cooperate, the easier it will be to enforce that part of the border region.

Q. What's your assessment of how Pakistan is doing on that front? Are they——

The President. Well, first of all, the first question is, is there a determination——

[At this point, there was a slight disturbance aboard Air Force One.]

The President. ——the other shoe just dropped. *[Laughter]* Look, I'm going to be thinking of shoe jokes for a long time. *[Laughter]*

Q. *[Inaudible]*

The President. Are you?

Q. Yes.

The President. I haven't heard any good ones yet.

President Zardari is determined; he's said so publicly, and he's said so to me privately. He looked at me in the eye and said, "You don't need to talk to me about extremist violence; after all, my wife got killed by extremists." Like a lot of other situations in which you're trying to deal with extremists who get embedded in the population, there are two aspects: one is to pressure them and to bring them to justice; and simultaneously, try to win the hearts and minds of the local folks, which is what is happening Iraq.

See, in Iraq, just remember, we did a clear, semi-build, and no hold. And it's the same concept in Afghanistan: clear, build, and hold; and it required 30,000 more troops to get that done, plus the training mission in Iraq to get enough troops to hold. Obviously, our commanders believe that the hold part is good enough for us to be able to move our troops. You understand the reason I moved troops out of cities into bases is to enhance the credibility of the Government.

Well, in Afghanistan, the same principle applies. We have cleared and we have built

some, but in certain Provinces we have not held. So now more troops will go in, and as they start to move, you'll see violence tick up because they're clearing new areas. PRTs, which were very successful in Iraq, are now being increased in Afghanistan. That's part of the build part. And training up Afghanis to be a part of the hold is going to take a while. But nevertheless, there's optimism there because the Afghan fighters are good fighters; they're proud to be in the military, and we're headed toward 135,000.

Pakistan/War on Terror

Q. You said there were two elements to Pakistan's work though. You said one was whether Zardari was determined; you said he was. What was the——

The President. That's the press—find them and get them, press them hard, and then win the hearts and minds of the locals through economic development.

Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Regions

Q. Sir, was that made more difficult by the use of UAVs? Are you and Hamid Karzai on the same page on that?

The President. Well, as you know—you know very well that when it comes to certain matters, the U.S. Government doesn't discuss operations.

Support for President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan/Free Elections

Q. Sir, Afghanistan is made up of a lot of different ethnic groups.

The President. Yes.

Q. A lot of them do not support Hamid Karzai. Is he the right person to lead the country through the next——

The President. Well, that will be determined by the Afghanistan people. That's the great thing about elections. He got 55 percent. You know, some of us would have loved to have 55 percent. *[Laughter]* And 51.5, not bad.

So the way you resolve a question like that is to have open and transparent elections. I

believe strongly in the election process because it is the best way to determine for certain what people think. You know, a controversial decision of mine was to press forward with the elections in the Palestinian territories. I was told, "Well, the wrong side may win." My attitude is, the best way to determine what the people think is to let them vote.

And Hamas didn't win because they said we promise you violence; Hamas said we'd win because we promise you better services. So my answer to the losers of the election is, if they have credibility at providing better services, why don't you figure out how you can do a better job and respond to the people? That's what elections do.

So the election process in Afghanistan will once again provide people an opportunity to say, "We're tired of this, or we appreciate that." And it's the good public servant who listens to what the people say.

Middle East

Q. Mr. President, if there was one—I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q. You mentioned the Middle East. Is there any more to do in your remaining 37 days on that?

The President. Ed [Ed Chen, Bloomberg News], we've—Condi is working a U.N. Security Council that affirms the Annapolis process. The question would be, will President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert want to lay out a specific state? And that's to be determined. But there is a way forward now.

The big sea change in the Middle East on this issue is that by far the majority of people recognize that the only way to peace is two states. And in 2001, that was not the case. In 2001, most of the Israeli political class believed that "greater Israel" was the only way to have security. And the Palestinian Authority was run by a person who could not deliver peace and was not trustworthy. So now you've got a Palestinian President who recognizes Israel's right to exist, and a Israeli political class that says, "If we want security, if we want peace, we've got to work for a Palestinian state." So the framework is there.

And the other point—the other significant change was that Annapolis brought many in the Arab world to the table. And in order

for there to ever be a Palestinian state, any Palestinian leader is going to have to have strong backing from the neighboring states, which was one of the reasons why Camp David fell apart under my predecessor. In other words, the other reason why is because the interlocutor on the Palestinian side just was—failed the Palestinian people. Not President—this was not President Clinton's fault.

Ms. Perino. Going to take one more.

End of Presidential Term/North Korea

Q. Just—in fact, it's sort of a wrap-up question—

The President. I'm going to go take a nap. Anybody—[laughter].

Q. If there is one thing you wish—

The President. Steven Lee [Steven Lee Myers, The New York Times], you want to take a nap?

Q. No, I'm all right.

Q. He doesn't need sleep.

The President. You look a little—[laughter]. Mind if I call you Jimmy Lee?

Q. Steven Lee.

The President. Stevie Lee, I mean.

Q. Stevie. [Laughter]

Q. If there is anything, when you look at this last month or so you have left, that you wish you could accomplish, in the foreign policy arena, or anything you want to say? If you had a single thing that you want to accomplish, what would it be?

The President. Last month? Well, it's to solidify the frameworks that will enable problems to be solved.

Take, for example, the North Korean issue. It is much easier to solve a problem diplomatically when there is more than one voice speaking to the leader of North Korea. And a success of this administration is to put a framework in place that has China, the United States, and South Korea and Russia and Japan all at the table, all saying the same thing. In this case, the message is, we need to have a verifiable process in place to determine whether or not you're fulfilling your obligations.

Secondly, in the old process it used to be, we will give you what you ask for and hope that you respond. Now it is, here's what you must do if you want our help. We've reversed

the process. And it's not just the United States speaking. So right now what you're watching is that the leader of North Korea is trying to test the process. First he said something Japan, and now he's saying something about so-and-so. And so the objective is to keep our partners firm on the understanding that the six-party process is the best way to solve the North Korean issue.

So he'll test—and this isn't the first time he's tested. He signed an agreement in September of 2005. Everybody said, "Great, looks like we're on our way to having the problem solved." And then he tested and changed his mind and did this, that, and the other. And the key is to be firm and patient with a structure that will enable the next President or the next President after that to be able to solve the problem diplomatically.

So there's one area right there that we're working on. Obviously, the Security Council resolution on dealing with the Annapolis process. We got the SOFA—SFA/SOFA done on Iraq.

Q. You got India done.

The President. Well, India was done, but she said the last month.

End of Presidential Term/Afghanistan

Q. Anything on Iraq, sir, in the last month?

Q. Afghanistan?

The President. Well, I think I should travel to Afghanistan in the last month of my Presidency, although it's not exactly the last month. So what's the date?

Ms. Perino. The 14th.

The President. Fourteen. Seventeen plus 17—37 days.

Q. Why is it you want to be in Afghanistan?

The President. I want to be in Afghanistan to say thank you to President Karzai, to let the people of Afghanistan know that the United States has stood with them and will stand with them. See, it's—if you notice, Steven Lee asked a good question—bipartisan foundation. These nations need to know that the United States has been with them, is with them, and will be with them. So the trip is a way to, say thanks to leaders that I have been working with for a long period of time.

By the way, both leaders in my last conversations, or the last couple of them, have

been saying, "You must come and visit us before you leave." And of course, I never committed until however long it was ago, 48 hours ago.

So, okay, I'm going to go take a nap.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:39 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Afghanistan. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hu Jintao of China; Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Corps—Iraq; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan; former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto, who was killed in a suicide attack in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, on December 27, 2007; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

December 15, 2008

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for coming out to greet me at a kind of a strange hour. [*Laughter*] General, I appreciate your accommodating what I'm calling "Rudolph One." [*Laughter*] After all, it is the holiday season. You might have heard, we made a little refueling stop in Baghdad earlier today. And now I'm proud to be back in Afghanistan. You might call it as—a early-morning wake-up call. Or in some of your cases, I might have shut—cut your evening off. We won't go there. [*Laughter*] In either case, I am proud to be with brave souls serving the United States of America.

And my dear wife sends her very best regards. So, on behalf of Laura and everybody else back home, Merry Christmas and a happy holidays. Congratulations on your tremendous accomplishments. And above all, thank you for volunteering to defend the United States of America.

You know, they often say, "What are you going to miss?" I'll miss the airplane, of

course. *[Laughter]* But I'm mainly going to miss being the Commander in Chief of such an outstanding group of men and women.

I appreciate Sergeant Major Vince Camacho for his service. I want to thank Ambassador Bill Wood; the commanding general of U.S. Forces, Afghanistan, General David McKiernan; Brigadier General Mike Holmes, commanding general, 45th [455th] * Expeditionary Wing; soldiers of the 101st Airborne, the Screaming Eagles.

I told the General that I had the honor of going to Fort Campbell the other day. And I saw a lot of your comrades, and I saw a lot of your families. And they have a message for you: Air Assault!

I thank the airmen of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. I kind of like your motto: "Start right, finish strong."

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Yes, that sounds pretty good for a guy with 36 days left. *[Laughter]*

The soldiers of the 3d Brigade Combat Team; 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One; soldiers of the 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Task Force Warrior; I want to thank all the troops from our coalition partners.

I appreciate your countries for supporting this noble cause. I want to thank all the civilians, the diplomats, the Embassy personnel who are critical to our success. I thank all the other brave Americans here today, including members of the United States Navy, the United States Marine combat personnel, FBI agents—

Audience members. Whoo!

The President. And last but not least—*[laughter]*. They may sound small, but they're plenty tough. And last but not least, the 101st Army Band. You probably played some high notes to keep the folks awake. *[Laughter]*

Afghanistan is a dramatically different country than it was 8 years ago. When I took office in 2001, the Taliban was brutally repressing the Afghan people. Girls were denied access to school. People who did not submit to the regime's radical beliefs were beaten in the public or executed in soccer stadiums. Al Qaida had freedom rein to operate the country—in the country. And it was here in Afghanistan that the terrorists

planned the attacks of September the 11th, 2001.

After that date, America gave the Taliban a choice: You can turn over the leaders of Al Qaida, or you can share in their fate. And when they refused, our just demands were enforced by the United States military. And thanks to you, the Taliban has gone from power, the Al Qaida training camps are closed, and 25 million Iraqis are free. And the American people, your loved ones, are more secure.

Removing the Taliban was a landmark achievement, but our work did not end there. See, we could have replaced one group of thugs with another strongman. But all that would have done is invited the same problems that brought us the Al Qaida safe havens and the attacks on America in the first place. Those were the mistakes of the 1980s and 1990s, and we were not going to repeat them again in the 21st century.

So America set an ambitious goal to help Afghanistan's young democracy grow and thrive and emerge as an alternative to the ideology of hate and extremism and terror. This is a difficult and long effort. It's not easy to do this. It would have been so much simpler to say we got rid of one bunch and here's another one. But that's not what we believe is right. We want to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. We want to do the hard work now so our children and our grandchildren can grow up in a peaceful world.

So we rallied good allies to our side, including every member of NATO. We've developed civilian experts in the form of [civilian]* reconstruction teams. And together with the determined people of Afghanistan, we are making hopeful gains.

Thanks to you, girls are back in school across Afghanistan. Does that matter? I think it does—I think it does. Thanks to you, boys are playing soccer again and flying kites and learning to be Boy Scouts. Thanks to you, access to health care is up dramatically. Thanks to you, Afghanistan's economy has more than doubled in size. And thanks to you, the Afghan people are preparing to go

* White House correction.

to the polls next year for another round of free elections. Thanks to you, Afghanistan has a democratic Government that is no longer an enemy of America; it is a friend of America.

The enemies of freedom in Afghanistan are determined, no question about it, and the fight has been tough; I don't need to tell you. This is a large country. It has a long way—it's a long way away from a modern economy with a viable infrastructure. It's hard to get around Afghanistan. Yet we have a strategic interest, and I believe a moral interest in a prosperous and peaceful democratic Afghanistan. And no matter how long it takes, we will help the people of Afghanistan succeed.

As a sign of our commitment, we've increased American troop levels in Afghanistan. Our NATO allies have done the same, and so have the Afghan people. The Afghan Army and police have grown. I call it a quiet surge. It's a surge that hadn't gotten much attention. But it has an unmistakable message: The Taliban has gone from power, and it's not coming back. Al Qaida terrorists have lost their safe haven in Afghanistan, and they're not going to get it back. Afghanistan will be a successful society and a hopeful society and a free society. And Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists to attack the United States of America.

In recent months, the violence has increased in some parts of Afghanistan. This is partly because we're going into new areas where the terrorists have never been challenged before. And if the enemy are fighting back, they don't like it when we show up. But ultimately, they will be no match for the Afghan people or her coalition partners. And they're certainly no match for the men and women of the United States military.

I am confident we will succeed in Afghanistan because our cause is just, our coalition and Afghan partners are determined. And I am confident because I believe freedom is a gift of an Almighty to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. Above all, I know the strength and character of you all. As I conclude this final trip, I have a message to you and to all who serve our country: Thank you for making the noble choice to serve and protect your fellow Americans.

What you're doing in Afghanistan is an—is important, it is courageous, and it is selfless. It's akin to what American troops did in places like Normandy and Iwo Jima and Korea. Your generation is every bit as great as any that has come before. And the work you do every day is shaping history for generations to come.

Because of you, America now has a strong friend and partner in the fight against extremism in a pivotal part of the world. Because of you, people across the broader east—Middle East now have an example of a more hopeful path—a model of liberty that can prevail over tyranny and terror. Because of you, killers who wanted to take the lives of Americans back home have been brought to justice before they reached our shores. And because of you and all who work to protect our Nation, America has done something many said was impossible: We have gone more than 7 years without a terrorist attack on our homeland.

This time of year is especially a time when we thank the Almighty for our freedoms. And we think of those who laid down their lives to protect those freedoms. Back home their children are growing up without a mom or a dad. But all of our children are growing up with something else; the promise of a safer America, the promise of a better world, and the more likelihood for peace.

This is a lasting memorial—all who have sacrificed here in Afghanistan. And thanks to you, that memorial will be achieved, and the sacrifice of your comrades will not have been in vain. We think of the comrades who have been wounded. And our Nation pledges that we will give them all the care and all the support they need to recover.

And finally, we think of your families back home. You've got a loved one wondering what you're doing, how you're doing; I want you to do me a favor: When you get back to wherever you're getting back to, call them, e-mail them, or write them. Tell them you love them, and tell them the Commander in Chief thanks them for their sacrifice, thanks them for loving you like they do, and thanks for—thank them for standing with you as you serve the noble cause of peace.

I am proud to be with you. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. May God bless

you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Command Sgt. Maj. Vincent Camacho, USA, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

**The President's News Conference
With President Hamid Karzai of
Afghanistan in Kabul, Afghanistan
December 15, 2008**

[At this point, President Karzai spoke in Dari, and no translation was provided.]

President Karzai. Most welcome, Mr. President. Most welcome.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thanks, Mr. President; it's good to be with a dear friend. You and I have spent a lot of time together, and we have done a lot of work together, all aiming to give the people of Afghanistan a better life. And I'm proud to be with you.

I hope you understand why it is important for me to get back to Washington, and that is because my wife expects for me to be back in Washington. *[Laughter]* We have a holiday reception at the White House, and so I'm going to have to hustle back; after all, I did sneak out of town under the dark of night. And now I'm going to go back home having visited this important country. So thanks for having me. And she sends her best. As you well know, that Laura's—one of her great passions is to stand with the courageous women in Afghanistan. And I can assure you, Mr. President, that after our time in Washington, we both look forward to continuing to stay in touch and to continuing to stay engaged with the people of Afghanistan. So Laura sends her deep respect and great affection for the people of Afghanistan.

You know, I was thinking when I—right before we landed, how much Afghanistan has changed since I have been the President. And sometimes it's hard when you're in the midst of a difficult situation, it's hard to get perspective. In 2001, the Taliban were brutally repressing the people of this country. I remember the images of women being stoned, or people being executed in the soccer stadium because of their beliefs. There

was a group of killers that were hiding here and training here and plotting here to kill citizens in my country.

Right after the attacks, I made it abundantly clear that we would bring people to justice for our own security; and made it abundantly clear that if a group of people harbored a terrorist, they were equally as guilty as a terrorist. And we gave the Taliban an opportunity to respond; they didn't. And American troops proudly liberated the people of Afghanistan. That's what life was like.

Now we could have replaced one power person with another. That would have been, I guess, the easy route, and then just left it behind, say we've done our duty and we've upheld the doctrine, and said, "Okay, we're now going to take this group, replace them with this group"—and just got out of the way. But that's not—that, one, didn't learn the lessons of the eighties and the nineties. And secondly, the interest is to build a flourishing democracy as an alternative to an hateful ideology. And it's not easy work. Afghanistan is a huge country. The road system is not nearly as well developed as a lot of other countries. You're just beginning to develop your resource base in a way that I hope benefits the people of Afghanistan; after all, it's their resources.

It's difficult because extremists refuse to accept the beauty of democracy. They've got a different vision, and so therefore, they're willing to kill innocent people to achieve their objectives.

There has been a lot of progress since 2001—after all, girls are back in school. I happen to believe that's important. As the father of twin girls, I couldn't imagine living in a society where my little girls couldn't have a chance to realize their God-given potential.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. You've got boys flying kites again in Afghanistan. You've got health clinics up all across the country. The President was telling me of a health clinic in the remote northeast region of Afghanistan, a place where it had been unimaginable.

The economy has more than doubled in size. It needs to double in size again, and then double in size again, no question. But it has doubled in size. Security forces are growing stronger. You've got good people in

Afghanistan who are—you know, want to work to provide security so that a political process can grow behind it.

Now there's been good progress made, but there are a lot of tough challenges. One of the great, interesting things that I'll be watching—since I believe so strongly in democracy—are the upcoming elections. And I've talked to General McKiernan, he said—who's told me that—about the strategy, along with Ambassador Wood, about the strategy to help the Afghan folks—the military, and political leaders—get the elections up and running. And it's going to be an exciting time for the people of Afghanistan, to go to the polls and be able to express their opinion. And I'm sure the press corps, the Afghanistan press corps, is looking forward to covering the elections. It'll give you something to do in a very important part of your country's history.

I told the President that you can count on the United States; just like you've been able to count on this administration, you'll be able to count on the next administration as well. It's in our interest that Afghanistan's democracy flourish. It's in America's interest that we forever deny safe haven for people who still want to kill our citizens.

And so, Mr. President, I come bringing the greetings of the country. It has been a privilege to work with you over these years. I have come to admire you, I appreciate your service, and I wish you and the people of Afghanistan all the very best.

President Karzai. Most welcome, Mr. President; it's our pleasure and honor. Most welcome.

Presidential Transition/President-Elect Obama's Foreign Policy

Q. My question is from His Excellency, the President of the United States. First, if President-elect Obama brings any change in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan or any change in the strategy to—towards Afghanistan or in the policies. Being from the Republicans, will your party support his plannings?

And second, regarding he said he was in Pakistan and the terrorists in Pakistan, what's your message to Obama that how he should deal with Pakistani Government regarding

terrorists, about the diplomat—using diplomatic ways or using military?

President Bush. Yes. Thank you. First, I am of a different political party than President-elect Obama. But I want him to succeed. I want him to do well. And to this end we have worked hard to help the transition.

Secondly, I think it is interesting that he has picked Secretary Gates, the Secretary of Defense under—the last couple of years under my administration, who will be the Secretary of Defense under his administration. And I think that should send a clear signal to the people of Afghanistan that the transition will be a smooth transition.

I expect you'll see more U.S. troops here as quickly as possible in parts of the country that are being challenged by the Taliban. I remember when President Karzai and President Musharraf and I had the famous dinner at the White House. And it—you know, the discussions really are the same today as they were then, and that is that extremists and terrorists and people who use car bombs and suicide bombers to achieve political objectives are a threat to all of us. And that there needs to be a comprehensive strategy in helping the Pakistan Government deal with those who bring great harm on their citizens and bring harm on the citizens of Afghanistan.

So to answer your question, I think it's a—we need to have a collaborative strategy. We need to work together in a constructive way. And we are making progress along those lines. You know, I was with President Zardari in—I think it was in New York. And I had never met him before, and I was reminding him that I'm, you know, a person who says that we will defend our country and defend our people. The most important job for the President of the United States is defend our people from attack.

He said, "You don't have to talk to me about extremists attacking people, extremists killed my wife." And so we're—there's a lot of consultations going on with the President—I think you're going to be meeting with President Zardari soon.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. And that's good, and I appreciate that.

Olivier [Olivier Knox, Agence France-Presse].

War on Terror in Afghanistan/Troop Levels in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, gentlemen. I have one question for the two of you. Canada has announced it's pulling out in 2011; South Korea is already gone. In that context are you concerned about the level of international support for the war here, and are the 20,000 additional U.S. troops enough to bring this conflict to a close?

President Bush. Well, first of all, as you know, I've always relied upon our military commanders to make the recommendations necessary to achieve the objectives we've set forth. We have added troops during—twice during my Presidency—obviously, in the initial move in and then we added troops to that. I've announced we're going to send in more troops. And then, of course, the Obama administration will be analyzing the situation, and it sounds like that they intend to expedite the—sending more troops in.

So—and why do we do that? Because this is what our generals suggest we do. To answer your—this is just going to be a long struggle, first of all. This doesn't end tomorrow. Ideological struggles take time. As a civil society whose firm political institutions begin to develop, extremism begins to wither; it gets marginalized, and then it withers away. And so it's going to take time. I can't tell you the troop levels we'll need; all I know is our generals said, this is what we need now. And they—I listened to them, and I'm confident President-elect Obama will listen to the commanders as well.

President Karzai. We're already very grateful to all those countries, nations who have come to help Afghanistan, and who have already helped Afghanistan. Canada is among the countries that's the frontrunner in assistance to Afghanistan. Their plans to withdraw their troops by 2011 or '12 is not in contradiction to the understanding that we have with them. They will continue to assist us in various other forms in Afghanistan.

What is important here is that while we are continuing to fight terrorism and to bring institutional strength and stability to Afghanistan, with an improved economy and im-

proved governance and service delivery by the Government, we also work on enabling Afghanistan to eventually stand on its own feet. The Afghan people don't want to be a burden on the international community forever. And we are grateful already that the international community is helping us in blood and their taxpayers' money.

We are grateful to Canada. We are grateful to all other countries, as partners for building Afghanistan, for fighting terrorists who are the enemies of all of us. So we are happy in any form of assistance other countries give us and will be grateful for it.

One—pick up one more question, Mr. President? You'd like to continue?

President Bush. All those who want another question, raise your hand. [Laughter] I guess so, Mr. President.

[A reporter began to ask a question in Dari.]

President Bush. Hold on a second.

Progress in Afghanistan/War on Terror in Afghanistan

[The reporter continued his question, and no translation was provided.]

President Bush. I respectfully disagree with you. The Taliban was brutalizing the people of Afghanistan. And they're not in power. And I just cited the progress that is undeniable.

Now, is there more work to be done? You bet. I never said the Taliban was eliminated; I said they were removed from power. And I said girls are going back to school, and boys are flying kites, and health clinics are opening, and the number of university students is dramatically expanding, and the number of schools around the country is growing, and there's a ring road built. Yes, there's no question there's a Taliban that wants to fight back. Why? Because they want to regain power. They can't stand the thought of a free society. And they're lethal, and they are tough. No question about it, no question about it.

So therefore, is the suggestion because they're tough that we just withdraw, that it's too hard work? Not as far as I'm concerned. I think it's necessary work. And it's in the interest of the United States that we not allow Afghanistan to become a safe haven

again for Al Qaida. Al Qaida is greatly weakened since 2001. As a matter of fact, they at one point declared the most central front in the war on terror in Iraq, where they're doing very poorly.

And they're not doing so well here either. Now, they can hide in remote regions. They can hide, but we will stay on the hunt, and we will keep the pressure on them, because it's in the people—the peaceful people of Afghanistan's interest, just like it's in the interest of this country.

And so, is there still difficult days ahead? Absolutely. But are the conditions a lot better today in Afghanistan than they were in 2001? Unquestionably, undoubtedly, they're better.

[President Karzai spoke in Dari, and no translation was provided.]

President Karzai. Mr. President.

President Bush. Steven Lee [Steven Lee Myers, New York Times].

Troop Levels in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If I could ask President Karzai first. We just came from Iraq, where they've signed an agreement outlining a security arrangement, and it includes a withdrawal of American forces within 3 years. I wonder if you envisioned a similar kind of arrangement where—would you like to see a scheduled withdrawal or a timetable of withdrawal for the foreign forces who are in Afghanistan? Thank you.

President Karzai. Well, sir, Afghanistan is in a cooperative arrangement with the United States and the rest of the international community. The decision in Afghanistan is to continue our cooperation with the international community until we have defeated terrorism and extremism and the threat that emanates from them to us, to our neighbors, and to the rest of the world. And Afghanistan will not allow the international community to leave it before we are fully on our feet, before we are strong enough to defend our country, before we are powerful enough to have a good economy, and before we have taken from President Bush and the next administration billions and billions of more dollars—[laughter]—no way that they can let you go.

President Bush. Yes, you better hurry up, in my case. [Laughter]

Thank you, sir. Thank you, all.

President Karzai. Most welcome, most welcome. Take care. Thanks very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 7:53 a.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; former President Pervez Musharraf and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan; and former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, who was killed in a suicide attack in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, on December 27, 2007. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this press conference.

Remarks on Lighting the Hanukkah Menorah

December 15, 2008

Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. You may have heard I've had a pretty eventful weekend. [Laughter]

So I slipped out Saturday night to Andrews Air Force Base, boarded Air Force One, and landed in Baghdad, Iraq, on Sunday afternoon. It was an unbelievable experience—it really was—to stand next to the President of a democracy and hold my hand over my heart as they played the national anthem in front of one of Saddam Hussein's palaces. I then had—[applause]. And then I had the honor to thank our brave troops who have helped make the transformation in Iraq possible.

This morning we landed in Afghanistan. I spoke to American forces serving courageously to make sure that Afghanistan never becomes a safe haven from which the killers could launch attacks on the homeland.

And then I met with President Karzai, who is determined to help the young democracy survive. And so he said, "Why don't you hang around for a while?" And I said, "Well, you don't understand. [Laughter] I need to get back to the White House for an important event." [Laughter] The Hanukkah reception is always one of the most special events of the season. Laura and I are pleased to be with so many friends. And we are honored

to gather with leaders of the Jewish community to celebrate our final Hanukkah here in the White House.

I want to thank our Attorney General for joining us. General, I appreciate you and Susan joining us. I am proud to be here with one of America's great United States Senators, Joe Lieberman—[*applause*—his greatness made possible by his wife Hadasah, I might add. [*Laughter*] And one of the young leaders of the United States Congress, Eric Cantor, and his wife Diana. And we're proud to be here with Kol Zimra as well, who will perform later.

The story of Hanukkah recalls the miraculous victory of a small band of patriots against tyranny and the oil that burned for eight nights. Through centuries of exile and persecution, Jews have lit the menorah. Each year, they behold its glow with faith in the power of God and love for His greatest gift, freedom.

This Hanukkah we celebrate another miraculous victory, the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. When President Harry Truman led the world in recognizing Israel in May of 1948, many wondered whether the small nation could possibly survive. Yet from the first days of independence, the people of Israel defied dire predictions. With determination and hard work, they turned a rocky desert into fertile soil. They built a thriving democracy, a strong economy, and one of the mightiest military forces on Earth. Like the Maccabees, Israel has defended itself bravely against enemies seeking its destruction. And today, Israel is a light unto the nations and one of America's closest friends.

This evening we have the great privilege of celebrating Israel's 60th anniversary and Hanukkah in a very special way. Thanks to the generosity of the Truman Library, we are fortunate to light the menorah presented to President Truman in 1951 as a symbol of friendship by Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion.

A decade after President Truman received this gift, he visited Prime Minister Ben-Gurion for one of the last times. As they parted, Ben-Gurion told the President that as a foreigner he could not judge President Truman's place in American history, but the

President's courageous decision to recognize the new State of Israel gave him an immortal place in Jewish history. Those words filled the President's eyes with uncharacteristic tears. And later, Ben-Gurion would say he rarely had seen somebody so moved.

And so tonight I'm deeply moved to welcome the grandsons of these two great men—Clifton Truman Daniel and Yariv Ben-Eliezer—to light the Truman menorah together.

Laura and I wish all the people of Jewish faith a happy Hanukkah and many joyous Hanukkahs in the years ahead. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Jalal Talabani of Iraq; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Susan Mukasey, wife of Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey; and entertainers Kol Zimra. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez of El Salvador

December 16, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, *bienvenido de nuevo*. I am honored to have you back. I appreciate your friendship, and I appreciate your strong leadership for the people of our close ally, El Salvador.

We've had a very good discussion. First, I want to thank you for your support of freedom in Iraq. You and—have been steadfast in recognizing that freedom is the way to help build lasting peace.

I appreciate very much the fact that your country is a vibrant democracy. You've been steadfast in your support for your—the right of your people to express themselves in a free society, and I applaud you for that strength.

I want to thank you very much for investing in your people. You're a—we've got a partnership through the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And part of your commitment was honest government and the investment in the health and education of your people. And you've honored that agreement. I thank you very much for understanding that the benefits of trade are good for your people

and our people as well. And you're a very strong advocate of CAFTA, which is working very well.

And finally, you've been very strong when it comes to helping interdict the flow of drugs. I explained to the President that since 2001, drug use in the United States amongst teenagers has declined by 25 percent. And the reason I said that is because in order to affect the flow of drugs there must be a comprehensive approach. First of all, we got to—we in the United States must reduce demand. But it also requires a strong cooperative spirit to interdict supply. And you have been very strong in that.

And so I thank you. It's been a pleasure to work with you. You may have heard that I'm about to retire. And as I head toward the great State of Texas, I will have very fond memories of our time together, and the strength of our friendship and of your leadership.

So welcome.

President Saca. *Muchas gracias.*

President Bush. *Si.*

President Saca. Thank you so much. I also thank President Bush. I think that we have got a very fruitful relationship and one that is very concerned for our people. I think that El Salvador is a good example of a country that moved from war to peace. And we've always had the contribution of the United States in all of the stages of this peace.

I always tell President Bush that free trade was so important, as well as the immigration issue for our people. And all these issues have been worked out, especially regarding cooperation with regards to the combat against drugs. I have confirmed President Bush that El Salvador is going to renew the FOL that we have at the Pacific coast. And that has allowed us to capture a lot of drug traffickers and seize a lot of drugs also for the Pacific coast.

So a mid-income country like El Salvador knows perfectly well that the path towards prosperity is effort and hard work and freedom. And this is something that Salvadorans practice on a daily basis. We have worked hand in hand with ILEA. And ILEA is the place where our judges and our prosecutors are being trained, and it is something that we're doing together with the United States of America.

With regards to the Millennium account, we have been very successful. We're working very fast. We're going to build a highway, a 300-kilometer-long highway in the northern part of the country. And at the same time, we're going to develop the rural areas along that highway. And all this has been done hand in hand with the United States.

I wish you the best of luck in your new life. I was just in Dallas recently, because I went to promote the TPS for our people. And everybody knew there that President Bush was going to move to Dallas. *[Laughter]*

You are leaving on January 20th. And I leave on the 1st of June.

President Bush. *Si. [Laughter]*

President Saca. So I hope that I can go and visit you and talk to you—

President Bush. *Por cierto—por cierto.*

President Saca. *Lo damos por cierto.*

President Bush. *Si.*

President Saca. Okay. President Bush has been a strong advocate of freedom. And I think that the United States has much to thank President Bush, especially the fact that the U.S. has not been attacked again by the terrorist groups. This is something quite intangible, because you cannot touch it, you cannot feel it, until that, unfortunately, something like that would happen again.

You can always count with the support of El Salvador on these issues, Mr. President, and the United States in general, the new President, because the historical relationship between the United States of America and El Salvador is a relationship of shared values, and we will continue to share in this friendship strongly, as it is now.

Thank you so much.

President Bush Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Saca referred to President-elect Barack Obama; FOL, the U.S. Military Forward Operating Location in Comalapa, El Salvador; ILEA, the Department of Homeland Security's International Law Enforcement Academies; and TPS, temporary protected immigration status. President Saca spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Reporting on the Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces Around the World

December 16, 2008

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. combat-equipped Armed Forces around the world. This supplemental report covers operations in support of the war on terror and in Kosovo.

THE WAR ON TERROR

Since September 24, 2001, I have reported, consistent with Public Law 107-40 and the War Powers Resolution, on the combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, which began on October 7, 2001, and the deployment of various combat-equipped and combat-support forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation in support of those operations and of other operations in our war on terror.

I will direct additional measures as necessary in the exercise of the right of the United States to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States.

United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to pursue al-Qaida terrorists and to eliminate support to al-Qaida. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qaida's training capabilities. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, ended the Taliban regime and are actively pursuing and engaging remnant

al-Qaida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 31,000, of which approximately 13,000 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council authorized ISAF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386 of December 20, 2001, and has reaffirmed its authorization since that time, most recently for a 12-month period from October 13, 2008, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1833 of September 22, 2008. The mission of ISAF under NATO command is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in creating a safe and secure environment that allows for continued reconstruction and the exercise and extension of Afghan authority. Currently, more than 40 nations contribute to ISAF, including all 26 NATO Allies.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operations since January 2002 continue to conduct secure detention operations for the enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay.

The U.N. Security Council authorized a Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq under unified command in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1511 of October 16, 2003, and reaffirmed its authorization in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546 of June 8, 2004, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1637 of November 8, 2005, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1723 of November 28, 2006, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 of December 18, 2007, set to expire on December 31, 2008. Under Resolutions 1546, 1637, 1723, and 1790, the mission of the MNF is to contribute to security and stability in Iraq. These contributions have included, but have not been limited to, assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces, supporting the development of Iraq's political institutions, improving local governance, enhancing ministerial capacity, and providing critical humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqis. The U.S. contribution to the MNF fluctuates over time depending on the conditions in theater as determined

by the commanders on the ground; the current U.S. contribution to the MNF is approximately 152,035 U.S. military personnel.

In furtherance of our efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends and allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with friends and allies in areas around the globe. These efforts include the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped and combat-support forces to assist in enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of our friends and allies. United States combat-equipped and combat-support forces continue to be located in the Horn of Africa region.

In addition, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of all of the geographic combatant commanders. These maritime operations have the responsibility to stop the movement, arming, or financing of international terrorists.

NATO-LED KOSOVO FORCE (KFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peace-keeping efforts in Kosovo, the U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish KFOR in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999.

The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, to verify, and, when necessary, to enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and Serbia (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities and, with local authorities and international police, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment that facilitates the work of the United Nations Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the European Union (EU)-led International Civilian Office, and the evolving EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX).

Currently, 25 NATO nations contribute to KFOR. Eight non-NATO countries also participate by providing military and other support personnel to KFOR. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is about 1,500 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 9 percent of

KFOR's total strength of approximately 15,500 personnel.

The U.S. participating forces in KFOR have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo but also have operated in other areas of the country based on mission requirements. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, helping to maintain a safe and secure environment remains the principal military task. The KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement. The KFOR currently coordinates with and supports UNMIK within means and capabilities and has provided similar assurances of cooperation to EULEX. The KFOR provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the country-side; and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, to protect all elements of the population living in Kosovo, and to help instill a feeling of confidence in all ethnic communities throughout Kosovo.

NATO continues periodically to conduct a formal review of KFOR's mission. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, force structure, force reductions, and the eventual withdrawal of KFOR. NATO adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans.

The UNMIK international police and Kosovo Police Service (KPS) have primary responsibility for public safety and policing throughout Kosovo. The UNMIK international police and KPS also have assumed responsibility for guarding some patrimonial sites and operating border crossings. The KFOR supports these police forces when requested and augments security in particularly sensitive areas or in response to particular threats as events on the ground dictate.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Proclamation 8329—Wright Brothers Day, 2008

December 16, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our history is rich with pioneers and innovators who used their God-given talents to improve our Nation and the world. On Wright Brothers Day, we commemorate two brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, who took great risks and ushered in a new era of travel and discovery.

With intrepid spirits and a passion for innovation, Orville and Wilbur Wright became the first to experience the thrill of manned, powered flight. On December 17, 1903, Orville Wright flew for 12 seconds over the North Carolina sand dunes in the presence of only five people. In the span of one lifetime, our Nation has seen aviation progress from the first tentative takeoff at Kitty Hawk to an age of supersonic flight and space exploration.

On this Wright Brothers Day, we recognize all those who have taken great risks and contributed to our country's legacy of exploration and discovery. This year, we also celebrate the centennial of the world's first passenger flight. By remaining dedicated to extending the frontiers of knowledge, we can ensure that the United States will continue to lead the world in science, innovation, and technology, and build a better future for generations to come.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 143), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America,

do hereby proclaim December 17, 2008, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 18, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 17, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 19.

Remarks at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania

December 17, 2008

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm sorry I'm late. *[Laughter]* But I am honored to be back at the Army War College. A few weeks ago, you celebrated this college's 107th birthday. I was interested to learn that the school was originally located across the street from the White House. Apparently after a few years on Pennsylvania Avenue, it was time to pack up your bags. *[Laughter]* Laura and I know the feeling. *[Laughter]*

General Williams, thank you for your leadership. Sergeant Major Powell, thank you for greeting me.

I'm traveling today with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jim Peake. I assume he got a seat. *[Laughter]* Peake, how are you—finally, yes! *[Laughter]* He actually was a 1988 graduate of the U.S. Army War College. He claimed he was the president of the class. *[Laughter]* But he also modestly informed me that the reason why is because he was the oldest member of the class. *[Laughter]* Anyway, Mr. Secretary, thanks for your service.

Students, faculty, and staff, it's good to be with you.

Over the past century, this important institution has become one of our Nation's most revered places. It really has been. After all, the graduates of this college are legendary—

and perhaps I'm looking at legends—Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, George Patton to Norm Schwarzkopf, Tommy Franks, and a man who I visited with recently, Ray Odierno. I want to thank you for continuing this college's noble tradition of military scholarship. I thank you for volunteering to serve our Nation during a time of war. I appreciate the officers from our partner nations who are studying here and who are strengthening their countries' friendship with the United States.

I know many of you have served overseas in the war on terror. This weekend I was honored to make one final trip to the frontlines in Iraq and Afghanistan. During my trip, I had the opportunity to spend time with men and women in uniform, and I've got to tell you, there is nothing better, to be the Commander in Chief and stand in front of brave souls who bring such dignity to the United States of America.

They say, "What are you going to miss?" I'm going to miss a lot of things, like no traffic jams on the way from Harrisburg. [*Laughter*] But I'm most going to miss being the Commander in Chief. It is amazing to serve with people who are willing to stand up and step forward to address the great challenge to freedom and democracy of our time. We have been called to action, and many have agreed to serve.

You know, the threat alert—emerged long before September the 11th. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the followers of a hateful and twisted ideology grew in strength and number. In lands where repression and despair reigned, these extremists found willing recruits for their murderous vision. They unleashed an unprecedented campaign of terror against the United States, attacking the World Trade Center in 1993, bombing two of our Embassies in Africa in 1998, striking the USS *Cole* in 2000.

For many years, our Nation viewed these attacks as isolated incidents, and we responded with limited measures. That changed on September the 11th, 2001. On that morning, Americans woke to news of a plane crashing into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Within the span of 90 minutes, a second plane struck the South Tower, a third one pierced the rings of the

Pentagon, and a fourth vanished from the skies above Pennsylvania. By nightfall, the sun had set on a very different world. With rumors of more attacks swirling, Americans went to bed wondering what the future would bring.

On that night, virtually no one would have predicted that more than 7 years would pass without another terrorist attack on our soil. It's not a matter of luck. It is a tribute to the dedicated men and women who work day and night to defend our great land. It's the result of tough decisions that we began making immediately after September the 11th.

You see, in those uncertain first weeks, there was no obvious precedent to follow. We faced a choice among many different courses of action. On one end of the spectrum, we could have responded with a purely defensive strategy, hunkering down behind our borders and retreating from the world stage. On the other end of the spectrum, we could have sought revenge through instant retaliation, attacking nations that support terror with no broader strategy to address the root cause of the problem.

I rejected both these extremes in favor of a deliberate and comprehensive approach, one where we used all elements of our national power to keep America safe at home, the understanding we needed to take the fight to the enemy abroad, and the idea of promoting liberty as the alternative to terror.

Last week, I spoke at West Point about transforming our military to wage this war. And today I'm going to talk to you about the strategy we pursued to keep our country safe, the results we've achieved, and the institutions we leave behind for future Presidents to carry on this struggle.

After September the 11th, we fundamentally reshaped our strategy for protecting the American people around three core principles. First, we recognized that our homeland security and intelligence capabilities were inadequate. So we launched the largest reorganization of the Federal Government since the beginning of the cold war with one overriding purpose, and that was to prevent new attacks.

Secondly, we recognized that even with the best defenses, we could not afford to wait for the terrorists to attack again. So we

launched a global campaign to take the fight to the terrorists abroad, to dismantle their networks, to dry up their financing, and find their leaders and bring them to justice. We sent a clear message that America will make no distinction between the terrorists and those who harbor them.

Immediately after September the 11th, we gave the Taliban in Afghanistan two options: surrender the leaders of Al Qaida, or you can share in their fate. When the regime leaders made their choice, we made ours. We removed the Taliban from power, we shut down the terrorist training camps, and we liberated more than 25 million Afghans.

After 9/11, we also reexamined the danger posed by Iraq, a country that combined support for terror, the development and use of weapons of mass destruction, aggression against its neighbors, routine attacks on American forces, systemic violations of U.N. resolutions. We concluded that the world could not tolerate such a destabilizing and dangerous force in the heart of the Middle East. I offered Saddam Hussein a final chance to resolve the issue peacefully. It was his choice to make. And when he refused, we acted with a coalition of nations to protect our people and liberate 25 million Iraqis.

Thirdly, we recognized that the war on terror is more than a battle of arms. It is an ideological struggle for hearts and minds. And to prevail, we must counter the terrorists' hateful ideology with a more hopeful alternative based on liberty and justice. So after removing the threatening regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, we refused to take the easy course of trading one strongman for another. Instead, we stayed to help young democracies emerge as beacons for hope for people across the Middle East. We increased our support for democratic reformers and dissidents around the world. We expanded our efforts to combat the conditions of despair and hopelessness that give rise to rage and radicalism.

While there's room for honest and healthy debate about the decisions I've made—and there's plenty of debate—there can be no debate about the results in keeping America safe.

Here at home we prevented numerous terrorist attacks, including an attempt to bomb

fuel tanks at JFK Airport, a plot to blow up airliners bound for the east coast, a scheme to attack a shopping mall in the Chicago area, and a plan to destroy the tallest skyscraper in Los Angeles. We'll never know how many lives have been saved. But this is for certain: Since 9/11, there's not been another terrorist attack on American soil.

And this is certain as well: Around the world, we're driving the terrorists from their safe havens. We are choking off their financing. We are severely disrupting their operations. Together with our allies, we killed or captured hundreds of Al Qaida leaders and operatives, including the architect of the September the 11th attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. And thanks to the success of the surge, the courage of our troops, and the determination of the Iraqi people, we have delivered a devastating blow to Al Qaida in the land Usama bin Laden once called the central battleground in the war on terror.

In the broader struggle between freedom and terror, people around the world have made their choice clear. In Afghanistan, 8 million men and women went to the polls to elect a President for the first time in their history. In Iraq, 12 million people defied the terrorists and elected a representative government. You know, one of the things I'll never forget are the ink-stained fingers of people who had a chance to vote their conscience. In countries from Liberia and Lebanon to Georgia and Ukraine, citizens have taken to the streets to cast off the chains of tyranny and demand their God-given right for freedom. And around the world, more people live in liberty than at any other time in human history.

This is a hopeful beginning. Yet it is only a beginning. Like the struggle against communism during the cold war, the struggle against terror will be a generational conflict, one that will continue long beyond my Presidency. As my administration leaves office next month, we will leave behind the institutions and tools our country needs to prevail in the long struggle ahead.

We'll leave behind a vastly upgraded network of homeland defenses. Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers are working together more closely than ever before.

The number of Border Patrol agents has doubled since 2001. Our airports and seaports have bolstered screening procedures. Major cities have installed early-warning systems for detecting biological and radiological attacks. And to better coordinate a comprehensive strategy for keeping our people safe, we have a new Cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security.

We'll leave behind a revamped intelligence community that has new tools for staying one step ahead of our enemies. Under the new Director of National Intelligence, Federal agencies are collecting and sharing information more effectively than ever before. At the new National Counterterrorism Center, representatives from 16 different Federal agencies are working side by side to track any new threat. The FBI—agents and analysts have shifted their focus from investigating terrorist attacks after they happen to gathering intelligence to prevent them from happening in the first place. The Treasury Department—there are new programs to shut down financing for terrorism. The CIA—human intelligence capabilities have improved. More operations officers have deployed overseas to penetrate the terrorist organizations. There's a program to interrogate key terrorist leaders. At the NSA, there are expanded efforts to monitor terrorist communications around the world. We need to quickly figure out who the terrorists are talking to and what they're saying in order to protect the homeland.

We will leave behind new technologies and resources for our military to keep the pressure on the enemy. Our forces are more mobile and more agile and better positioned now to deploy to trouble spots around the world. On the battlefield, they have access to real-time intelligence that would have been unimaginable just a couple of years ago. With weapons like the Predator drone in our arsenal, our troops can conduct precision strikes on terrorists in hard-to-reach areas while sparing innocent life. At institutions like the Army War College, our men and women in uniform are studying new counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies, because we're going to depend on you. Long after I'm gone, Presidents will count on you.

We will leave behind a strong coalition of more than 90 nations—composing almost half the world—who have committed to combating terror and sharing intelligence and keeping our citizens safe. This coalition includes Saudi Arabia, the nation that produced 15 of the 9/11 hijackers and now serves as a staunch ally in the war on terror. This coalition includes Pakistan, a country that was a supporter of the Taliban before September the 11th and today is a strong partner of the United States. This coalition includes two of America's newest and most courageous friends, the free nations of Afghanistan and Iraq. This coalition includes members of the new Proliferation Security Initiative and the new Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, who are working to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

We will leave behind new programs to help change the conditions of suffering and hopelessness that give rise to extremism and terror. In Afghanistan and Iraq, new Provincial Reconstruction Teams are helping rebuild war-torn communities and revive local economies and restore basic government services. On the continent of Africa, millions are receiving lifesaving treatment, thanks to America's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. And around the world, countries that govern wisely and open up their economy and invest in the health and education of their people are receiving strong support through Millennium Challenge grants.

And finally, we leave behind an unprecedented commitment to extending the reach of liberty and democracy. Key organizations devoted to supporting freedom enjoy stronger government support than ever before. Official U.S. policy now requires our diplomats to seek out and support dissidents and democratic reformers in unfree nations. And it is now the stated policy of the United States to seek the end of tyranny in all nations, for all time.

Until that day comes, the United States will not rest in our fight against oppression and terror. As President, I've had no higher responsibility than waging this struggle for the security and liberty of our people. After 9/11, I vowed that I would never forget the wounds from that day, and I'm not. That day

defined my Presidency, and that day changed the course of history. And while we cannot know the path ahead, we can be confident in the destination: a world where the American people are safe and children around the world grow up with hope and peace.

We can be confident because freedom is universal. I strongly believe there's an Almighty, and a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth is freedom. We can be confident because we're blessed with men and women who willingly put the welfare of their nation before themselves. As long as we have defenders of such character and courage, our Nation will always be in good hands, and the future will always be bright.

So I thank you for inviting me today. I thank you for having given me the honor of a lifetime to serve as your Commander in Chief. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Robert M. Williams, USA, commandant, U.S. Army War College, who introduced the President; and Command Sgt. Maj. Jose M. Powell, USA, U.S. Army War College; Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA (Ret.), former commander, and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA (Ret.), former commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring the United States-Afghan Women's Council

December 18, 2008

Well, thank you for inviting me. [*Laughter*] A couple of things: One, Jack, thanks very much for lending the prestige of Georgetown to advance a noble cause that I agree is in our Nation's national security interests and our moral interests, and that is the empowerment of women in Afghanistan.

Ambassador, thank you for coming; thank you for working with our Government.

And I'm so proud of Laura. She could have come in and said, "Oh, why did you drag me into this?" [*Laughter*] But instead chose to use her position to take on some important causes. And the advancement of women's rights in Afghanistan or freedom in Burma are noble causes that are essential to the peace of the world. And so I thank you for your leadership on this.

I just came back from Afghanistan, Ambassador, and I told the people there that the United States will not forget them; that it's essential that the people in Afghanistan realize that even though the Presidents have changed, our commitment to Afghanistan remains very strong at the governmental level, as well as in the private sector. And I am confident that the Afghan Women's Council sends that same signal that you can take a risk for peace and freedom; that your courage won't be really isolated in the face of thugs who can't stand the idea of women having freedom.

And so I take great heart in knowing that the Afghan Women's Council will survive beyond our time. Having said that, I can assure you that Laura is going to be involved, and so will I if she lets me. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I'm off to give a little talk here, but I did want to come by and thank you all very much. I thank you for representing the best of America, and I thank you for recognizing that sometimes hard things require a lot of effort. It is really hard to go from tyranny to freedom. But it's going to happen. It is inevitable, because freedom is universal.

And so I'm glad to come by, and thanks for letting me butt in.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Yellow Oval Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John J. "Jack" DeGioia, president, Georgetown University; and Afghanistan's Ambassador to the U.S. Said Tayeb Jawad. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included remarks by the First Lady, Ambassador Jawad, and Mr. DeGioia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the American Enterprise Institute and a Question-and-Answer Session

December 18, 2008

Christopher DeMuth. Mr. President, what's on your mind this morning?

The President. First, thanking you for being the leader that you've been, and thanking AEI for generating good thought. People in the public arena need to have support for philosophy, and that's what you provide. So I appreciate all your hard work.

I thought I'd share some thoughts about the Presidency; you could call it "reflections on a—by a guy who's headed out of town." [Laughter] And then I'd be glad to answer questions—and foreign policy, if you want to.

First, I have found that—and by the way, every President is going to conduct their own way of doing business there in the White House. So mine is just mine. I have found that in order to have good decisionmaking and a White House that functions well, that the President needs to articulate a set of principles from which he will not defer. In other words, a set of principles that are inviolate, such as the universality of freedom. That's part of my foreign policy. A cornerstone of my foreign policy is my firm belief that freedom is universal. And freedom applies to Methodists and Muslims, men and women.

I've just come from an Afghan Women's Council that Laura was hosting. I believe that Afghan women have a right to be free just like women in America have a right to be free.

I believe in the collective wisdom of the American people. In other words, I believe we ought to trust individuals to be making decisions for their families. And it's always a tension between government—who can spend the money better, government or the individual? And that's been the basis of my tax-cut policy.

The tax cuts, of course, have been, you know, obscured—the benefits of the tax cuts have been obscured by the recent economic crisis, no question about it. But when they finally take a look back at whether or not tax cuts were effective or not, it's hard to argue against 52 uninterrupted months of job growth as a result of tax policy. And so my

hope is, is that after this crisis passes—and it will—that people continue to write about and articulate a public policy of low taxes.

My health care policy also was all aimed at empowering individuals to make decisions for themselves and an attempt to establish a marketplace for individual policy by changing the Tax Code or health savings accounts.

I've been a firm believer in markets. That may sound contradictory to some of the policies that I have been making recently, which I'd be glad to discuss with you. [Laughter] But I strongly believe in the principle that markets really do represent the—a free society. I mean, after all, people produce goods and services based upon the demand of the individual.

I can remember going to China when my dad was the envoy there, and everybody had the same clothes on. It was like there was no demand. And then having gone back at the Olympics and saw a society in which the marketplace is beginning to function, it's just a vastly different society. And I happen to believe it's a society that—societies based upon the marketplace will be not only more free but more hopeful.

I have found that a President should take on tough problems. The temptation in politics sometimes is just kick them down the road; like, it's too hard to do, so let's just let somebody else do it. One such problem was immigration reform. And in this case I chose to put the spotlight directly on the issue by giving an Oval Office address. Obviously, we weren't successful about getting comprehensive immigration reform. Nevertheless, I feel good about having tried.

Part of the Presidency is the willingness to say, no matter how tough the issue may look, if it requires solution, go after it. And we did. And I do believe there will be a blueprint for a way forward. In other words, we must change the system. It's not working. Obviously, there needs to be more border enforcement—and we're doing that—but people need to be treated with dignity, and there needs to be a way forward for people who are lawful citizens. And there needs to be a temporary-worker program, for example, so that our employers who are relying upon people who are doing jobs Americans weren't doing aren't criminalized.

Anyway, the job of the President is to tackle these problems. And finally, the job of the President is to look over the horizon. And that's—sometimes that gets you in conflict with the legislative branch. The legislative branch tends to have a shorter term horizon than the executive branch. And so Chris mentioned Social Security; it's an example of a President looking beyond the moment and recognizing that this system is going to be bust unless we change it.

And I worked to lay out solutions. Rather than just call attention to the issue, I actually used my State of the Union Address a couple of times to talk about how we can look at changing the benefit structure, based upon wealth, as a way forward.

And I also talked about something that was quite controversial, and that's personal savings accounts. And of course, any time you go from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan, and you're the person who gets to define the benefits, you're not likely to want to give up that ability. Nevertheless, there too is an issue where the—it didn't succeed. But nevertheless, I used the Presidency, the executive branch, the concept of the Presidency, to lay out a way forward. And so I appreciate you giving me a chance to come by and just share thoughts.

One final thought on the Presidency is, the Presidency—the institution of the Presidency is more important than the individual. And that's what really makes our country great. The Presidents will come and go with their strengths and weaknesses, but the ship of state sails on because of the institution being greater than the person.

And so the job of the President is to not only make decisions—you campaign for office, and you lay out what you're going to do—but a lot of times decisions come that you didn't expect. You got to be hoping for the best and planning for the worst in your Presidency. But it's also to bring stability to the institution itself.

And so there are some reflections for you. I'd be glad to answer some of the questions.

Presidential Powers

Mr. DeMuth. I have a batch here for you. And I'd like to start with a few questions about the institution of the Presidency, and

with a genuinely hard, difficult question involving the President as constitutional officer. When you were a candidate in 2000, you said that you thought that you would veto legislation that you thought was unconstitutional. In office you've done what all of your predecessors—recent predecessors have done, which is to sign legislation and leave the constitutional questions to the courts.

It was pretty clear, at least to me, that you had real constitutional reservations about McCain-Feingold. But you signed it, your Justice Department argued for it, rather than against it, in the Supreme Court and won. And I'm wondering if, looking back, what you think of the old practice, which is for the President to stick to his own views on the Constitution, rather than leaving the Supreme Court as the sole decider.

The President. Well, there's been a big debate about war powers inherent in the Constitution. And I made some decisions during this war based upon what I thought was my constitutional power. And so there's an example of—as opposed to a piece of legislation, there's an example of me not allowing—you know, initially having the courts define what the power is. And that's—this has been a long-time debate, constitutional debate, is what are the war powers of a President?

And as you know, I have been aggressive at pursuing the enemy within the bounds of the Constitution. And some of the decisions I have made are being adjudicated in the Court. And so I'll dodge the one on legislation, but I won't when it comes to taking a constitutional view of the office of the Presidency.

Working With Congress

Mr. DeMuth. On legislation and dealings with the Congress, tell me, which is harder for a Republican President, a Democratic Congress or a Republican Congress? [*Laughter*]

The President. Sometimes they're both equally difficult. [*Laughter*] A Republican Congress was easier in some ways because we were able to work with the leadership to—on the timing of votes, for example, or judicial nominees. In some ways it was more difficult because when you worked with the

Congress, there was a ability at times to forgo Republican principles, and it put the President in a awkward position.

For example, budgeting; without the line-item veto, the President is in an awkward position when it comes to budgeting. So we sit down the leadership and say, here's the top line. We agreed to the top line. That's what the budgets did in the top line—with the top line. And yet, the slices of the pie were, in the recent past, really earmarks. And so without the line-item veto, it made it very difficult for me to bring budgets discipline. They could have—people said, well, just veto the whole budget. And my answer to that is, we, in good faith, negotiated the size of the pie. And so some Republican principles were violated when it came to earmarks, for example.

It's easier to veto bills when you're going against the—when the Democrats are in power, because, after all, it's Republicans who crafted the bills coming in. And so both are difficult, and both are necessary, and both have been interesting. *[Laughter]*

No Child Left Behind Act/Medicare

Mr. DeMuth. Presidents have to make compromises to get legislation that they really want. You made several compromises in winning your first big legislative victory, the No Child Left Behind program. Were there compromises that you made in obtaining that legislation, in legislation or execution, that you regret as you look back on it?

The President. I'm pleased with the progress in No Child Left Behind. The philosophy of No Child Left Behind was that in return for money, you must measure. That, of course, created some issues. Some Republicans and conservatives said, "What business is it of the Federal Government to insist upon accountability?" After all, there shouldn't be much of a role for the Federal Government. And people on the other side said, "We don't want to be measured."

I believe it is a Republican and conservative principle that we ought to ask for results. And if you're going to spend money, then it makes sense to say, "Are we achieving results?"

Secondly, as you know, I campaigned on compassionate conservatism. It's conserv-

ative to ask for accountability, and it's compassionate to insist that inner-city children be able to read at the fourth grade level. And yet, oftentimes the system was so process-oriented that the school districts would say, how old are you, and if you're 10, you're supposed to be here; and 11, here; 12, here—without wondering whether or not the child can read or write and add and subtract. So the basic principle inherent in No Child Left Behind, the philosophy of it, remained very much intact in the bill, and it's working.

And the Medicare bill—a quite controversial bill—was one where Republicans wrote the bill, and there was some compromising inherent in the bill. Nevertheless, the two broad principles remained intact: one, if you're going to make a promise, reform the program so it's effective. So, like, for example, we paid thousands of dollars for surgery but not a dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the surgery from being needed in the first place. And we put market-oriented principles in the bill. You probably remember the debate where the—you know, there was a big debate about how much would this cost. And the CBO came up with a number, and I think it's now 40 percent less than what was anticipated because of market principles. Nevertheless, the bill wasn't as strong on market principles as I would have liked to have seen it.

And so, yes, you're, obviously, making compromises all the time with Congress. The key is to compromise without compromising principle. You can compromise points, but don't sell out the principle that is inherent in the bill.

National Economy

Mr. DeMuth. You'll be surprised that I have several questions about the auto bailout. *[Laughter]* Let me put it in the context of this discussion. Isn't the Detroit bailout an example of interest groups thinking they can get a better deal from the executive branch than from the Congress?

The President. That's an interesting way of putting it. First, let me take a step back. I haven't made up my mind yet, so you're assuming something is going to happen. *[Laughter]* This is a difficult time for a free

market person. Under ordinary circumstances, failed entities—failing entities should be allowed to fail.

I have concluded these are not ordinary circumstances, for a lot of reasons. Our financial system is interwoven domestically, internationally. And we got to the point where, if a major institution were to fail, there is great likelihood that there would be a ripple effect throughout the world, and the average person would be really hurt.

And what makes this issue difficult to explain is—to the average guy is, why should I be using my money because of excesses on Wall Street? And I understand that frustration. I completely understand why people are nervous about it. I was in the Roosevelt Room, and Chairman Bernanke and Secretary Paulson, after a month of every weekend where they're calling, saying, we got to do this for AIG, or this for Fannie and Freddie, came in and said, the financial markets are completely frozen, and if we don't do something about it, it is conceivable we will see a depression greater than the Great Depression.

And so I analyzed that and decided I didn't want to be the President during a depression greater than the Great Depression, or the beginning of a depression greater than the Great Depression. So we moved, and moved hard. The autos, obviously, are very fragile, and I've laid out a couple of principles. One, I am worried about a disorderly bankruptcy and what it would do to the psychology and the markets. They're beginning to thaw, but there's still a lot of uncertainty.

I'm also worried about putting good money after bad; that means, whether or not these autos will become viable in the future. And frankly, there's one other consideration, and that is, I feel an obligation to my successor. I've thought about what it would be like for me to become President during this period. I have an—I believe that good policy is not to dump him a major catastrophe in his first day of office. So those are some of the considerations that we're weighing.

What was the question on autos? [*Laughter*]

American Auto Industry

Mr. DeMuth. The President-elect said——

The President. Oh, you said Congress and the executive branch.

Mr. DeMuth. Yes, yes.

The President. Well, just remember a majority of Congress voted for a plan that we thought was a good plan. It didn't get the requisite votes in the Senate in order to move it on, but there was a majority vote if you add up the House and the Senate. So the Congress, in one way, expressed its will for a way forward with some—with a plan, or a strategy for viability.

Mr. DeMuth. But there must be some question in your mind whether the two political branches are better at bankruptcy restructuring than a bankruptcy court. I mean, we do have a law.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. DeMuth. Do you think when everybody stops——

The President. I think under normal circumstances, no question, the bankruptcy court is the best way to sort through credit and debt and restructuring, no question. These aren't normal circumstances; that's the problem. This is—it's a hard issue for political people, because people never know how bad it could have been. And so the decisions you make are easy to—for people to say, "Why did he do that? Why is he wasting our money on this?" Or, "Why is he doing that?" Because without a catastrophe, the reasoning doesn't—it just doesn't really make it down to the grassroots.

People look at, "My money being used because Wall Street got excessive." And I make the case that I didn't want to do this. It's the last thing I wanted to do. Nevertheless, I felt compelled to do it, because it would make life worse for you. We lost 533,000 jobs last month. What would another million jobs lost do to the economy? What would that do to the psychology in markets? What would that do—how would that affect the working people? And so as you can tell, we're all in, in this administration. And if need be, we'll be in for more.

National Economy

Mr. DeMuth. It may be bad form to recall campaign rhetoric during a transition, but I remember President-elect Obama during the campaign blaming the crisis on Bush deregulation. Do you have any opinion on that assessment of the causes?

The President. I'm looking forward to the true history of this financial crisis being written. No question, part of the crisis came about because of excesses in lending in the housing market. My administration early on expressed concern about implicit government guarantees and the mortgage industry in Fannie and Freddie, and that we were concerned about excesses in lending and concerned about Freddie and Fannie having too much capacity to lend because of the implicit guarantee. And so we called for a regulator.

But this will all be sorted out when they finally analyze what went right or what went wrong. When you're the President, you can think about what went right and what went wrong; you can analyze it. But when you're getting phone calls from the Secretary of the Treasury saying, we got to do something on AIG, otherwise there could be an international collapse, that's where your mind is. And that's where my mind—it turns out this isn't one of the Presidencies where you ride off into the sunset, you know, kind of—[laughter]—waving goodbye.

President's Advice to Elected Officials

Mr. DeMuth. Do you have—on Fannie and Freddie, do you have any advice for our new President, such as that they be abolished? [Laughter]

The President. No, my advice for all elected officials after this crisis passes is to remember that markets and free enterprise is what made the country great, and that these measures were temporary measures. They're not an excuse for the Government to be running automobile companies, if that's the decision I make, or for the Government to be always involved in mortgages; that there is a proper role for Government, which is oversight; and that the role of Government really is to create an environment in which risk takers feel comfortable taking risk and where capital moves as freely as possible.

That's why I am a big believer in free trade, for example. Trade opens markets; trade gives—and fair trade, I might add—and trade gives people an opportunity to risk and have their products sold in environments other than the domestic environment.

The danger is, of course, that people who believe the government can manage the economy better than the private sector will use this decision as an excuse to keep Government involved. And that's why AEI is going to be important long after my Presidency, to be talking about the merits of markets and the merits of free enterprise.

I hosted this international conference, and what was interesting out of the international conference was that people said we should defend the marketplace and defend trade. One of the great fears I have is—a couple of things—one, that the United States could become isolationist. We have done so in the past, and it's kind of a—could be a fatigue about helping liberate people, or helping people advance, or helping people on HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa—you know, “We're tired of doing this; can't other people do it?” That could lead to isolationism. I'm very worried about that. The world needs America's involvement. We're a compassionate, decent, strong nation.

And I'm worried about protectionism. Protectionism tends to be the twin of isolationism. And I'm worried about protectionism because I—if you study the economic past, protectionism is what caused the Great Depression to be a greater depression—Smoot-Hawley Tariff. If you're interested in development and helping poor nations become less poor, then you ought to be an advocate for trade. It's one thing to give out grants, but the amount of wealth generated by trade overwhelms the amount of money that the world gives out in grants.

And so anyway, keep going.

Government Bureaucracy

Mr. DeMuth. Keep going. I have a question or two about inside the executive branch.

The President. Okay.

Mr. DeMuth. Presidents also have to contend with the fourth branch of Government; that is the bureaucracy, the permanent Government.

The President. Oh, I thought you were going to say the press. [*Laughter*] Symbiotic relationship with the press, I want you to know.

Mr. DeMuth. That's right, it's the bureaucracy and the press. The bureaucracy can outmaneuver the White House. And domestic and foreign policy agencies have, you may have noticed, opposed your policies and undermined them on occasion. And I wonder if you have any advice for future Presidents about how to contend with that very difficult problem.

The President. Make sure information gets into the Oval Office on a timely basis so that when you find bureaucracies delaying policy, then you do something about it. It's not inevitable that—the best bureaucratic move, if people disagree with policy, is just to delay and hope the President isn't paying attention.

And so therefore, the structure of the office is going to be important, and I've tried to keep a relatively flat organizational chart so that key players can come into the office on a regular basis. I did so for two reasons. I like to hear different points of view, and I want people to feel comfortable coming and saying, "Here's what I think," or, "Here's this delay taking place"—"Do you understand that you said this and then nothing has happened, Mr. President?"

And the other thing is, is that a lot of the job is to build a sense of teamwork, a sense of team. Listen, these people in the White House work incredibly long hours. And if they don't see the President, it creates anxieties. And so people walk in, and they tell me what's on their mind. They go home and say, "You know, I told him—you know, I saw the President." [*Laughter*] They didn't say whether I listened or not. [*Laughter*]

And so one way to deal with the bureaucracy is to be well informed. And the best way to be well informed is to make sure you have an organization that enables information to get in the Oval Office in a timely fashion. And therefore, you're going to need to have a Chief of Staff—at least this is the way I thought it should be done; I'm not telling anybody else how to do it. You scholars can figure out whether it's right or wrong, how it's worked relative to other Presidents.

But my Chiefs of Staff, Andy Card and Josh Bolten, are—have been—are unusual people because they have not said, everybody must go to me before you go see the President. In other words, they're not junior prime ministers. They are facilitators who understand that this system suits me best, and therefore, aren't jealous about the time that I allocate to somebody who they haven't necessarily blessed in the White House, in the Oval Office. And so it's worked pretty good.

President's Staff

Mr. DeMuth. That's fascinating. Let me pursue one point that you made. Ronald Reagan was once asked if it was true that his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense were arguing openly in front of him. And he said, "All the time." Have you encouraged people to argue to move the hard questions in the Oval Office?

The President. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Creating tension is good for decision-making, so long as it doesn't become destructive. And I see Leon there; we've had some serious debates inside the White House on stem cell. And they were open, and they were—all opinions were welcomed. And there was a variety of opinions.

Sometimes issues are easy to resolve, where the national security adviser and the domestic policy adviser could come in and say, "We've discussed the issue internally, Mr. President, and we all agree." But in matters of war, for example, there's difference of opinions; the surge, for example. There was a lot of different opinions on the surge. And that's the way it should be. People say, "Well, do you ever hear any other voices other than, like, a few people?" Of course I do. And I have enjoyed listening to the debates among people I work with. And I also like the idea of people being able to walk into the Oval Office and said, "Have you thought of this?" Or, "The debate is headed this way; I'd like you to consider this."

And sometimes that can be disruptive, obviously, but the President has got to have a—be grounded enough and have enough judgment to know how to manage the advisers.

Bioethics/Stem Cell Research

Mr. DeMuth. You mentioned stem cell research.

The President. Yes.

Mr. DeMuth. Some people forget that before 9/11, that was one of the big issues of your first months in office.

The President. It was.

Mr. DeMuth. It was the subject of your first national address on television.

The President. It was.

Mr. DeMuth. And I wonder if looking back, you think—what you think you're most important legacy is in the area of bioethics? And what you think your most important accomplishments were? If there was more that could have been done?

The President. Well, I told the American people I believe in a culture of life. I believe a healthy society is one that protects the most vulnerable among us. And clearly, the most vulnerable among us are those who aren't born yet. Obviously, abortion is a very controversial subject, and it's one that creates a lot of emotions.

I try to diffuse the emotions by saying, look, good people disagree on the issue; I understand that. But throughout my Presidency, I have tried to help advance the culture of life. And one of the really classic tensions between the culture of life is that with science. And it's—Leon Kass instructed me throughout this process that tensions existed for a long time, and will continue to exist.

And the fundamental question with stem cells is, do you destroy life to save life? And it's a difficult issue for a lot of people. I came down on the side that there are other opportunities available to save lives other than the destruction of life. And secondly, I was concerned about using taxpayers' money to—that would end up destroying life. There's a lot of people in our country that don't want their money spent on—for that purpose.

I developed a policy, which I thought sounded rational. And that is, there have been some stem cells lines already developed, embryonic stem cell lines developed prior to this decision; therefore, we should go forward with research on them. But from that point forward, no destruction of life with Federal money. Since then, adult skin cells have been used to develop the equivalent of

embryonic stem cells. And so science has advanced, and at the same time, we were able to stake a claim for the culture of life. It was a very emotional issue. And that's what happens when you confront controversial topics.

And I believe the President should have a core set of beliefs and stand on those beliefs.

Health Care System/Prescription Drugs

Mr. DeMuth. Thank you. The U.S. is one of the—it's the only advanced society that doesn't have comprehensive price controls on pharmaceutical drugs. We have the highest-priced drugs, and we have the highest rate of innovation in lifesaving new drugs. We're moving, clearly, toward increased price controls at the administrative level and in Congress. Pharmaceutical companies are cutting back on their R&D investments. Do you think this trend is inevitable? Do you think that your Medicare Part D reforms will make that problem worse, or by introducing market mechanisms, help be the solution?

The President. The whole medical debate is headed toward whether or not the Government ought to be setting the price of medicine. I believe that we ought to resist that and cause markets to flourish. And we don't have a real functioning market in health care right now. I'm going to get to the drugs in a minute but—generically, to use a drug term that the problem is, is that you've got many people's policies being paid by somebody else, and there's—so therefore, there's no market. People don't say, well, how much is this costing, or what's the quality of health care with this person or this hospital?

So the consumer—there's no consumerism. There's no demand for better price. And so part of the policies I described early were to, like, do health savings accounts or changing the Tax Codes, all aiming at putting the patient in the midst of the market, getting that person to demand better quality at better price.

In terms of drugs, I am concerned about Government pricing drugs to the point where drug manufacturers don't have enough capital to keep reinvesting in new discoveries. One of the great things about our medicine is we're the best in the world. And all policy ought to be aimed at keeping us the best

in the world. There are policies in place that allow manufacturers to amortize the cost of their R&D, and then generics become available. And it seems like to me that we can do a better job of making people aware of generic drugs.

And part of Medicare Part D does just that. It shows seniors what options are available, and they get to choose a variety of plans. I remember the debates on Medicare. People said, well—and kind of inherent in the debate was this sense of—that, well, maybe seniors don't know how to choose things. You know, they're used to the Government plan, and therefore, isn't it a—too much of an imposition to provide people with all different options? And when we were selling the Medicare reform, I can remember going to senior centers, and there would be seniors looking at 10 different plans to choose from. And people were competing for their business. And these plans would go out and find the generics, to make them available.

And so I—the marketplace is a much better allocator of resources than the Government trying to allocate resources. And secondly, the American people need to know, if somebody needs financial help, if somebody is poor and destitute, they'll get help in our system. And there's a lot of help for people who are destitute.

National Economy

Mr. DeMuth. A related question is the ownership society, a major theme of yours. Will it survive the financial crisis? Will we recover our bearings? Are the initiatives you put forward in the name of greater ownership going to—are they going to come back after—

The President. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, you know, the danger, of course, is that Government stays so involved that markets don't really develop. Just some thoughts on this: I am—the markets sometimes create excesses. We're living through the consequences of the excess.

I quipped in Texas that Wall Street got drunk, and we got a hangover. And that's what happened. There wasn't much transparency. There was so much liquidity that people felt like they needed to invent product to get in front of the money train. And

the danger, of course, will be that we—instead of having rational regulation that's balanced, we'll over-regulate. And if we do, then it's going to make it harder for the ownership society, because it's going to make it harder for free enterprise to flourish. But the idea of owning small businesses has been an integral part of our country's past and should be in the future.

The key there is the tax policy. Will we price small businesses out of the capacity to retain capital and grow? So most small businesses pay individual income taxes because they're subchapter S or limited partnerships. And so when you hear people say, tax the rich—when they start raising that upper bracket, they're also taxing a lot of small-business owners. And policy ought to be asking the question, how do we encourage small business ownership growth, not how do we penalize it?

So over-regulating the overall economy will make it harder for the ownership society, and I just hope that doesn't happen. I don't think it will. I understand the concerns; I share the concerns, and there's going to be a lot of people like AEI speaking out against keeping the Government at the helm of the economy. And good tax policy and good regulatory policy beyond that will help small businesses grow. That's an integral part of the ownership.

Same with housing. The key on housing is, obviously, the interest rates: How much does it cost to buy a house? And people are going to own homes. And the housing market will lead this recovery when it starts. And it's going to take a while though. I'm not an economist, but it'll take a while. And there are some encouraging signs—not many, but some. Evidently the amount of mortgage applications rose, which is a good sign. I don't know whether that's working off unsold homes yet, but it's a good sign.

And by the way, there's a lot of talk about stimulus. And I'd like to remind our fellow citizens, there is a stimulus package taking place right now, and that is the reduction of gasoline prices. And the reduction of gasoline prices from July to now on an amortized basis—if you take the reduction here, and you amortize it over a year, it's about \$2,000

a family, which is an effective stimulus package.

Energy

Mr. DeMuth. Let me ask you two questions, if I may, about energy policy. The first is, are you satisfied with the progress in recent years in reviving nuclear energy? The second is about ethanol. The question says, "Ethanol subsidies are popular with politicians of both parties"——

The President. Like me.

Mr. DeMuth. ——"but not with ordinary folk outside the State of Iowa." [*Laughter*] Does this have something to do with the timing of the first presidential primary?

The President. Sounds like some of my friends in Texas asking that question. [*Laughter*]

Mr. DeMuth. You can talk about nuclear power.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*] The country needs to overcome its fear about nuclear power if we want to have ample electricity so we can grow and be good stewards of the environment.

Part of the problem with nuclear power was that the regulatory scheme was such that people would risk a lot of capital and then have to seek permission for final approval late in the process, and would find themselves tied up in a court of law. And so they had enormous capital spent, earning no money, waiting for permission to build the plant. And therefore, capital chose not to go into the nuclear industry.

In terms of safety, the engineering has changed dramatically from the past. And I think people who are objective on this issue would tell you that nuclear power plants are very safe.

In terms of regulatory relief, as a result of the last energy bill I signed—I think it's the last energy bill—we began to streamline the process, and as well as we provided some insurance incentives for people to start building. I'm satisfied that we're beginning to change the environment. I'm satisfied that more Americans understand why we ought to be using nuclear power. I am pleased that there are, I think, like, 13 permits that have been on application. And I am pleased that

some plants are beginning to expand on their current footprint.

I am not pleased about how slow we're moving overall though. I think we ought to really get after nuclear power, I mean, if we really want to solve our dependency upon foreign energy.

What's going to happen is, by the way, the technologies will help change our habits. For example, there's going to be battery technologies in automobiles that will enable people to drive the first 40 miles on electricity. And everybody is going to—oh, that's great, hybrid plug-in batteries. The question will be, where do we get the electricity? And it's very important to pursue nuclear energy.

Secondly, I'm a big supporter—I presume I'm one of those guys you were talking about on ethanol—pandering to the corn—actually, I think it's important—I felt it was important to begin a diversification of our energy sources. And whether or not the ethanol market will stay viable, I don't know, but it has certainly become a relatively significant part of our mix right now. And I laid out a mandatory goal that we ought to head toward, because I'd rather have our farmers growing our energy than rely upon certain parts of the world that don't like us.

Presidential Transition/Defense Spending/U.S. Armed Forces

Mr. DeMuth. You mentioned the word stimulus. And as you know, your successor is thinking about a big new stimulus program emphasizing public works, I believe. An issue that has interested a lot of people at AEI recently is this: While we're looking for public expenditures to help stimulate the economy, we're also at a point where defense expenditures are I think something like 3.4 or 3.5 percent of GDP—very, very constrained. A lot of weapons systems that a lot of people like to buy from us are being closed down, even after we've only produced fewer of the weapons than had been anticipated.

One of the things we're pursuing is that a very effective stimulus program would be a significant increase in defense expenditures. Have these ideas been kicking around the White House, the Pentagon? This is just think-tankery so far. I wonder if——

The President. No, that's good. I'm glad you're doing it. No, no, we're not going to tell President-elect Obama how to run his administration, nor will I spend a lot of time second-guessing him. I believe once the President gets off the stage, you get off the stage and let the next man do the job.

Matter of fact, I worked hard to make this transition a smooth transition. I want him to succeed. And I know you do as well. And so we really haven't been trying to help him fashion an economic policy. It's his job when he gets sworn in.

And I fully understand, however, your concerns about the defense budgeting. There will be a lot of debate about systems, what's relevant and what's not relevant. One of the successes of this administration—and Secretary Rumsfeld gets a lot of credit for having started a major transformation of our military, so that the weapons systems we build are relevant to the war that we're going to be fighting in the 21st century—or, hopefully, not fighting, but be prepared to fight.

I'm sure you follow this, Chris. We've changed our basing around the world so that our forces no longer are configured based upon cold war problems, but based upon the ability to keep morale high and move quickly. Our soldiers are carrying unbelievably new technologies, using Predators to use over-the-wall intelligence to be able to have better battlefield awareness. They're well equipped.

In terms of the big systems, those will be choices that are always in conflict. I can remember campaigning in 2000, and they said, "Name a weapons system you'll get rid of." I said, the Arrow. [Laughter] I think it was the Arrow system; not the bow and arrow, but it was a big, huge cannon. And it turns out, the cannon had parts made in 42 States. Needless to say, it was hard to put the cannon on the shelf. I didn't think we needed a huge cannon that required enormous ships and trucks to move around in a—what turns out to be a battle that requires special operators to move in the dark of night, on real-time intelligence, in a quick way.

So there will be a lot of debate about weapons systems, no question about it. And a lot of communities around the country rely upon defense spending and the jobs that accrue as a result of defense spending.

By the way, people say, "What are you going to miss?" I know I'm not—I'm asking myself questions. [Laughter] But I'm going to miss being the Commander in Chief of our military. My view of America is, obviously, different from everybody else's, but I get to look at these troops, and I marvel at their courage. And I marvel at the fact that these folks have volunteered in a time of war.

And the Commander in Chief—at least I've tried to say to our troops: Thank you. Thank you for your courage; thank your families. You do that by visiting the wounded and meeting with the families of the fallen. I've been reading a lot about Abraham Lincoln recently. I just finished James McPherson's book, and, once again, he talks about how Lincoln would visit with the enlisted folks as well as the generals, visit with the widows as well as the moms, visit with the wounded. And it's going to be very important for the country as we head down the future to recognize that this all-volunteer force is—needs to be sustained by commitment as well as—by monetary commitment as well as psychological commitment. We got to be with these kids.

War on Terror

Mr. DeMuth. Another book that you famously read was Eliot Cohen's "Supreme Command." And he later went to work for you.

The President. Yes, he did.

Mr. DeMuth. Do you think he got it right in that book?

The President. I can't even remember the book. [Laughter] I remember reading it, but give me a synopsis. [Laughter]

Mr. DeMuth. That—

The President. You can't remember it either. [Laughter]

Mr. DeMuth. No. [Laughter]

The President. Just teasing. Did he work for you at AEI? Is that why you're—

Mr. DeMuth. He was on our council of academic advisers.

The President. Yes, okay. I did read it.

Mr. DeMuth. The essential point is that in history, in wartime, Presidents do well not leaving the war to the military, but being the supreme commander themselves.

The President. Oh, that's right, yes. Well, you're going to have to rely upon the military a lot. There's four basic constituencies for a President during war; one is the American people. And this has been a difficult assignment, to convince the people that what happens in Iraq matters to our own security at home; that what happens in Afghanistan matters to the security; and that—the first task was to remove the regimes that threatened peace and threatened our security. And the next task is to not replace one strongman with another, but encourage a democracy to grow, because we're in an ideological struggle. And it's the ideology of liberty that defeats the ideology of hate every time.

A second constituency was the enemy. And they got to know we're going to go after them all times, all places—unrelenting pressure on them.

Third, in the case of Iraq, were the Iraqi people; they wanted to know whether or not America was going to keep its word, because if not, they're going to find a local militia that could keep their families safe.

And the fourth is the military. And the military must know that the mission is just, the goals are clear, and the President will not be making decisions with their lives based upon an opinion poll. And, anyway.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia

Mr. DeMuth. Thank you. You said that you'd entertain a question or two about foreign policy.

The President. Sure.

Mr. DeMuth. Let me ask you another one. You caught a lot of flak for saying that you'd looked into Vladimir Putin's soul and seen a friend.

The President. I looked in his eyes and saw his soul.

Mr. DeMuth. In his eyes and saw his soul.

The President. Right.

Mr. DeMuth. Thank you. He——

The President. Sometimes Presidents get misquoted. [Laughter]

Russia-U.S. Relations

Mr. DeMuth. That was in I think 2001. And the Putin of 2004 was very different, and in 2008 is different still. What's your

thinking on the evolution of the Kremlin during your Presidency?

The President. First of all, there's common ground between Russia and the United States. And one area of common concern is the issue of proliferation. And there's a lot of cooperation taking place to work constructively with Russia to make sure that raw materials don't get in the hands of rogue regimes or terrorist groups.

Secondly, we found common ground on Iran, believe it or not. People don't think we have, but I know we have. And that is that the Russians are just as worried about Iran developing a nuclear weapon and the capacity to deliver it as we are.

And I've told this story publicly, that Vladimir and I were talking—I think it was, like, '06 maybe—and he went to the leader in Iran and said, "You know, George Bush thinks you should have civilian nuclear power and so do I, but we don't believe you should have the right to make that uranium, to enrich it, because you've violated IAEA treaties, and therefore, we don't believe you're trustworthy. And therefore, why don't you just take—we'll deliver the fuel, and we'll pick up the fuel, and you can have your nuclear power. And if you continue to insist on enriching, it must mean you want something other than nuclear power—civilian nuclear power like you've claimed."

Obviously, we have big differences over Georgia. And I saw Vladimir at the Olympics right as the troops moved into Georgia. And I was—I expressed my concerns, and he expressed his. I would say that our relationship is still friendly, although I haven't seen him much because there's a new President. And I really haven't had that much of a chance to get to know President Medvedev.

I will tell you that—my only point is there's common interests, and there's going to be a lot of tensions. And the President has got to be in a position where he can deal with those tensions in a way that doesn't send chilling signals with other allies.

President-Elect Barack Obama

Mr. DeMuth. I have a few general questions. At some point—maybe it's already happened—you'll sit down with President-elect

Obama, and give him a little candid President-to-President advice, lessons learned. Would you be willing to share any of that advice with the rest of us?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] He came in the Oval Office. We had a very good discussion. I was impressed by the questions he asked. And I told him I wouldn't reveal them, so that if he ever asked for my advice again, he would feel comfortable doing it knowing that it wouldn't be out there for public consumption.

I'll tell you this though; I will say this—the guy loves his family a lot. And we spent some time talking about what it meant to be—for me to be a dad with two daughters in the White House. And he's a dad who will have two daughters in the White House. And his family is a top priority for him.

Presidential Advice for Conservatives

Mr. DeMuth. I have another advice-like question. Political conservatives believe that they're in for a period in the wilderness. What advice do you have for political conservatives in the years ahead?

The President. Look at history. I think you're old enough to remember 1964. Nineteen sixty-four was a wipeout for conservatives and Republicans. In my State of Texas, the legislature was 149 Democrats and 1 Republican. [*Laughter*] And there were no Republicans in the State senate. I think there was one elected Congressman—Bruce Alger out of Dallas—and John Tower wasn't up for election. I don't know if there were any elected Republicans at the courthouse. And yet in 1966, Republicans and conservatives rebounded; one of whom got elected that year, it was George H.W. Bush, by the way, out of Houston.

And my point is, is that things go in cycles in politics. Now, what—in order to win, it's important to recruit good candidates who stand on principle. Most Americans believe what we believe: that Government ought to be limited and wise; that taxes ought to be low; that we ought to encourage entrepreneurship and small businesses; and that we ought to have a strong national defense.

And I'm a little concerned about the tone of the immigration debate, labeling our party as “anti”-people. It's one thing to say they

want the border enforced, and I understand that. But if a group of people think that a political party is against them, it doesn't matter what else you stand for. And the tone, in my judgment, at times got to be “anti.” At one point in our history we had too many Jewish people and too many Italians. I don't know if you remember that. And it was—I'm just confident people were saying, “I can't believe this is the America that I came to live in where I'm “anti”—people are “anti”-me.”

And so we're going to have to work, like, with the Latino vote to say, we care about you, we hear you, and we share your values: faith and family, small businesses, military vets or, you know, disproportionate—more Latinos serve as a percentage of their—of population in the military than any other group, if I'm not mistaken.

So we'll come back, absolutely. And I'll be out there, the old sage, sitting around, you know—[*laughter*]—“if only you did it this way.” [*Laughter*]

President's Post-Presidency Agenda

Mr. DeMuth. I have a couple of old sage questions for you.

The President. Sure, an old sage at 62, but—

Mr. DeMuth. Well—

The President. —headed to retirement. [*Laughter*]

Mr. DeMuth. Immigration is a subject that you've—you thought a lot about—

The President. I have.

Mr. DeMuth. —before you came to the White House, had very strong views on. Is this one of the issues that you might stay involved in in your post-White House—

The President. I'm going to stay involved in the freedom initiative, that's for certain. I am concerned that our country becomes isolationist; I really am. I—you know, there is a debate that basically says, well, maybe certain people shouldn't be free. It's like if you ever heard—people say, “Bush is imposing his view.” Well, if you ever hear somebody say that, they must not understand the universality of freedom. Freedom is not mine to give. I happen to believe it's a gift of an Almighty to everybody. And therefore, the role of the United States is to help people

be free. And that—you know, sometimes, obviously, you never want to use—I mean, you only use your military reluctantly.

But I'm not talking about just freedom from tyranny. I'm talking about freedom from disease. You know, an enemy that we face, and will face for the next decades, can only recruit when they find hopeless people. Think about their recruiting posters: "Hey, join us; you get to be a suicide bomber." You have to be pretty hopeless to fall prey to that evil.

And so therefore, it's in our national interests to help free people from poverty and disease.

And so I'll be involved with the freedom movement. I'm particularly involved right now with the malaria and HIV/AIDS initiative, PEPFAR. I will be involved with free trade. As I told you, I'm worried about protectionism. I am very disappointed that the Colombia free trade agreement and the Panama free trade agreement and the South Korea free trade agreement did not get a vote prior to the election.

An initiative that I believe is a very important initiative is the faith-based and community-based initiative. The fundamental principle behind that initiative is, if your program works, we should help you, if it meets a societal need. For example, if you're a drug addict, and, you know, you believe you need a higher power to help heal your heart so you get off drugs, and the program that you're going to works, I have no problem giving a voucher to that person so they can redeem it at a program that works.

And so there will be a lot of things I'm going to do out of Southern Methodist University. I will—this will not compete with AEI. It's going to be a policy center; it will be complementary—[laughter]—to AEI.

Mr. DeMuth. We've talked to them.

The President. And we'll be living in Texas. Laura is going to be—listen, my wife has been a fabulous First Lady, she really has. She has used her position to be able to articulate some important causes. She heralds teachers; she promotes literacy; she believes strongly in freedom in Burma; and she is very much involved in the Afghan women. And she will continue doing—using her position as ex-First Lady to do that.

The Presidency/Texas Sport Teams

Mr. DeMuth. I have two more questions along these same lines.

The President. Okay.

Mr. DeMuth. These are very serious questions, and I'll ask them both. The first is, what will you miss the least? [Laughter] And the second is, when you're back in the Lone Star State, which sports teams are you going to be paying the most attention to?

The President. All Texas teams, of course. You know, I have been—first of all, some will probably say, "Oh, the press." Well, that's not true. I've had a good relationship with the White House press. I don't like some of the things they say. Of course, they don't like some of the things I say. But we've had a good relationship with the press. And the press and the Presidency is a very important relationship, and it requires a lot of work to get along. But I recognize they need me for news, and I need them for outlets. And so it's been a good relationship in some ways. I don't—as I say, I don't like everything they write, so therefore, ignore that part that I don't like. [Laughter]

I'll miss the petty name-calling—I mean, I won't miss it. I have been disappointed at times about the politics of personal destruction. It's not the first time it's ever happened in our history, but I was—I came with the idea of changing the tone in Washington, and frankly, didn't do a very good job of it. You know, war brings out a lot of heated rhetoric and a lot of emotion; I fully understand that. I know that's the case. But surely we can do a better job in Washington of treating each other with respect. I don't want to be a self-serving fellow, but I have never used my position as President to personally denigrate somebody.

And so that's something—I'm not going to miss it at all. I'm disappointed in how—the words that came out of people's mouth, and I'm very disappointed of how the process has treated some of my friends. I'm disappointed in the judicial process, for example, where our nominees just got held out there forever. Never had a chance to get a hearing, and yet all kinds of stuff were occasionally floated on them about their reputations. It's going to be hard to attract good people to the political process if people show up and feel like

that their integrity or decency will be, you know, challenged at every turn. There's nothing wrong with challenging policy. There is something wrong with tearing people down for the—trying to help somebody else gain politically.

And I won't miss—I'll miss a lot. As I told you, I'll miss being the Commander in Chief. I'll miss the people I've worked with in the White House. We have a—I tell people, some days happy, some days not so happy—every day is joyous. And that's a true statement. I'm working with some awesome people, and I love them dearly and will miss seeing them every morning. But since I'll be an e-mailer again, I'm sure I'll be able to—*[laughter]*—stay in touch.

Mr. DeMuth. President Bush, I—permit me to thank you for coming over here and for these very deep reflections. I'd also like to impose my thanks and that of my colleagues to you for your great service to America—

The President. Thank you.

Mr. DeMuth. —and for your steadiness of purpose and your tremendous optimism and idealism and serenity of mind, which has been just astonishing to behold.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Mr. DeMuth. And I know that these will not be your last words, and I know that we all look forward to welcoming you back to AEI as Citizen Bush early and often.

The President. Thank you, sir. Thanks for letting me come by. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Christopher DeMuth, president, American Enterprise Institute; Leon Kass, former Chairman, President's Council on Bioethics; former Secretary of State George P. Shultz; former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia; and former Rep. Bruce Alger of Texas. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Interview With Steve Scully of C-SPAN

December 18, 2008

The Presidency

Mr. Scully. Mr. President, as we speak to you in the Oval Office, you're really one of only two individuals that can view the Presidency through your dad's eyes and your own. What has surprised you about this job?

The President. Well, first of all, being the son of the President is much harder than being the President. I agonized for my dad. When they would say things about him that I didn't think were fair, I agonized, because I love him so much. And I sometimes didn't react so well. I mean I would get angry at whoever said it and, you know; anyway, I was frustrated.

The President is a much different role, and therefore, I mean, I understand it comes with the job when people say things about you. And so we've got kind of a role reversal. My dad agonizes when he reads stuff about me. So I found that being President is actually easier than being the son of the President in many ways.

2004 Presidential Election

Mr. Scully. You took the job with a Florida recount, a shortened transition period, and as you reflect on that time 8 years ago, were you in any way at a disadvantage in taking over this office?

The President. That's an interesting question. I do think it—the Florida recount set kind of an ugly mood amongst some in the electorate. In other words, the election was—in their minds, was in doubt. That made it harder to come as a—to unify the country after the election.

In terms of the transition, we had—I had a lot of experienced people that were ready to hit the ground. And they did a remarkable job of getting us ready to assume office when we did.

Presidents Meeting

Mr. Scully. You announced yesterday that the former Presidents will meet with the incoming President—

The President. Right.

Mr. Scully. —here at White House. Has that ever happened before?

The President. I don't think so. And this is an idea that President-elect Obama suggested here in the Oval Office when he came to visit me. And I'm going to follow up on it. I'll be the host, and I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be an interesting lunch.

Mr. Scully. What will you talk about?

The President. I don't know. I'm sure he's going to ask us all questions, I would guess; if not, we'll just share war stories.

President's Farewell Address

Mr. Scully. Will you deliver a farewell address in this office?

The President. Yes, I'm thinking about it. I'm thinking about it. A lot of Presidents have, and I'm giving it serious thought. I don't want it to be, you know, kind of a real emotional goodbye. If I give it, it's going to be trying to leave behind some lessons learned.

Mr. Scully. Well, let me share with you what two former Presidents have said.

The President. Good.

Mr. Scully. First, Dwight Eisenhower in 1961 said, "Crises will continue; [we'll face them]. In meeting them, whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular [or] costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties."

The President. Right.

Mr. Scully. And then he talked about the industrial military complex.

The President. Right. That was an interesting observation. And obviously, each farewell address is going to be tailored to the circumstances under which the President had to make decisions.

And I suspect if I do one—and I really haven't figured it out yet, but I have talked to a speechwriter about, should I decide to do it, what would we say? And one thing, of course, is going to be we have to be vigilant and can't let our guard down, because a terrorist threat still exists.

Mr. Scully. Ronald Reagan had said, "Are we doing a good enough job teaching our children what America is and what she represents in the long history of the world?" In his statement of saying there's a great tradi-

tion of Presidential warnings as they leave the White House.

The President. Interesting. I haven't really viewed the farewell address in terms of Presidential warnings, but I can—it makes sense to say, "I've learned this, and I wish my successor all the best, and America needs to be on the lookout."

One option for me is to talk about isolationism and protectionism, and that it's very important for us to resist those "isms." The world needs our presence. The people dying of AIDS on the continent of Africa need a robust response by the United States to save lives. We need voices calling upon coalition members to stay in the fight against the terrorists. And protectionism is rearing its ugly head; witness the fact that we had trouble getting good free trade agreements through the Congress with Panama and Colombia and South Korea.

And so maybe that's what I'll warn about as well. Thank you for giving me some ideas.

Use of Former Presidents

Mr. Scully. How should we use former Presidents? How do you want to be used, in what capacity, as you leave this office?

The President. Yes. It's an interesting question. One thing I don't want to do is stay on the stage. The spotlight needs to shift to President-elect Obama, and it needs to stay on President-elect Obama, because he's the President. And therefore, I won't try to get it to shift to me. And I'll be very respectful of him during his Presidency.

I think each President is going to have to chart his own way. I'm going to build a policy institute at Southern Methodist to talk about, for example, the "isms"—isolationism and protectionism, and the need to resist them—or the transformative power of freedom.

President-elect Obama, I am confident, will call upon Presidents to take on a mission. I will be happy to do it, particularly if I agree with the mission. For example, I asked Dad and President Clinton to help on the tsunamis. But, you know, each role will be defined according to the comfort level of the ex-President.

George W. Bush Presidential Library

Mr. Scully. Are there some things that you want in your library?

The President. Well, I do want to have a policy center. You mean in terms of how it's going to function?

Mr. Scully. [*Inaudible*]*—*and the facility, and how it's going to work.

The President. There will be the classic library, you know, rotating exhibitions to keep it relevant so people will be interested in it. And of course, there will be archives. They tell me that we moved 25,000 boxes full of files and memos, and I think they said, like, 30 million e-mails—or 300 million e-mails. I mean, a huge number of e-mails; none of which are mine, by the way, since I haven't been e-mailing.

And there will be a policy center. And this is a place of debate, discussion, a place to herald freedom, a place to continue some of the initiatives that we've started, like the malaria initiative on the continent of Africa, or PEPFAR. And Laura is going to be wanting to be involved with women's movements around the world, the freedom movement in Burma. And that—the policy center and the museum are going to take a lot of time.

President's Second Term

Mr. Scully. You've had a tough couple of years. Most second Presidents have had tough second terms. Why is that?

The President. Well, in my case, I was a wartime President, and war is very exhausting. War is hard for a country. And, you know, I made the decision that we were going to win. And there has been some critical moments where I guess I could have taken the popular way out and retreated, like in 2006, but instead went with 30,000 more troops, because I felt strongly that defeat in Iraq would be terrible for the security of the country, it would be terrible for the morale of the military, and it would be really hard for me, the Commander in Chief, to face a mother who lost a son in combat.

The other part of my Presidency that's been hard is we've had, you know, huge economic turmoil recently. And, you know, I'm just so sorry it's happening. But it is happening, and therefore, I have made the decision not to let there be a massive collapse,

which would hurt the average guy in the street. And what's hard about this one is, a hard-working taxpayer is making his mortgage, wonders why the President is using his money to save firms that got a little over—got a little excessive in their desire to make money. And I understand that complaint. And my answer, of course, is, is that if I thought they could fail without causing the average guy real economic hardship, I'd have let them.

Anyway, so it has been a—it's been an interesting Presidency from that perspective.

American Auto Industry

Mr. Scully. One issue that continues to be in the news—the auto industry.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Scully. Are you looking for concessions from the unions in order to try to figure out how this is all going to come together?

The President. Yes, you see, there's two principles that's driving me on this. One is, a disorderly bankruptcy could be very destabilizing for what is now a fragile financial market. In other words, I am concerned about a shock to the system. I'm also concerned about putting good money after bad. And therefore, it's going to be very important that whatever we do, that there be a plan that the autos—that would be management as well as dealers as well as labor—show how they could be viable for the future.

You know, this is just a very difficult economic time for the country. And I am concerned about people's 401(k)s declining. I'm concerned about joblessness. But I made the decision that my team and myself will not let the economy go down.

Federal Government

Mr. Scully. When you took office, did you expect to have the biggest expansion of the Federal Government under your watch?

The President. I knew the mandatory spending—that would be Social Security and Medicare—were going to rise substantially because baby boomers like me were getting ready to retire. I didn't realize we'd be in war and—because, you know, the attacks of September the 11th came out of nowhere. But once we were in war, I darn sure was going to make our troops—make sure our

troops had what they need to succeed. And most of the growth in nonentitlement spending came on the military and homeland side. And you bet I was going to fund the troops, and you bet we're going to make sure the homeland is protected.

Presidential Vetoes

Mr. Scully. Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan in their 8 years used the veto pen three or four or five times as often as you have.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Scully. You've used it about a dozen times.

The President. Right.

Mr. Scully. Why?

The President. Well, primarily because I was working with people in my own party. In other words, for the first 4 years of my Presidency—see, up to '06, we ran the Congress, except in the beginning. And so therefore, I would sit down with colleagues—not “colleagues,” but party members and friends, and we'd work out our issues. And we got a lot done that I was satisfied with. Toward the end I had to veto because I didn't agree with what Congress was doing.

And one area where it was very difficult for me was on the budget. See, you sit here in the Oval Office, and we'd agree with the—I'd agree with the Speaker and the leader of the Senate on the size of the pie—“Here's what we need to spend, and here's this much for military and this much for education, this much for health.” We all agreed to that. The problem was the slices of the pie got to be a problem because of earmarks. But I didn't have the line-item veto. And therefore, once you agree to the size of the pie, you're pretty well stuck with what's in the pie until the President gets the line-item veto.

Government's Checks-and-Balance System

Mr. Scully. In terms of the institutions, do you think that the checks and balance work between this end of Pennsylvania Avenue and the other end?

The President. Oh, absolutely, yes. I mean—and there's constant back and forth between the executive branch and the legislative branch, and of course the judiciary

weighs in a lot. But yes, we got a great system.

U.S. Supreme Court

Mr. Scully. How often, if at all, do you talk to the Supreme Court Justices?

The President. Rarely. Rarely. You know, Laura and I hosted a dinner for the Justices and their spouses and—but, yes, I may see them socially or, you know, at some of these banquets that you go to where the comedian makes fun of the President, then the President makes fun of himself, and everybody has a jolly time, except the President. But, yes, the Justices will be at some of these dinners, and I'll just chitchat with them, but never talk policy, of course, with them.

Media Coverage of the President

Mr. Scully. Media—another institution here.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Scully. A lot of cable talk shows, a lot of radio programs talking about you. First of all, do you watch the programs?

The President. No.

Mr. Scully. And have the media treated you fairly?

The President. You know, it's hard to tell. I mean, I will tell you, my relationship with the media is—with the individuals in the media has been very good. And that's all I can expect. Of course, I read what's written, and I, a lot of times, don't like what's written. Then I realize they may not like what I'm saying. But I have no complaints. In other words, I'm not one of these guys who'll say, “Oh, man, everybody misunderstood me because of the media.” I'm a little disappointed at some of the platforms that encouraged harsh rhetoric.

Mr. Scully. Such as?

The President. “Bush is a liar.” And there's a—it seems like to me that there's such competition for air space that some people feel like if they can yell louder, with harsher rhetoric, then they'll get noticed.

And the tone hasn't been good in Washington, and I've been disappointed in that, and I bear some of the blame for that.

Bipartisan Government

Mr. Scully. Well, in fact, you said, on December 14, 2000: “I’m optimistic that we can change the tone in Washington. I believe things happen for a reason, and I hope the long wait of the last 5 weeks will heighten a desire to move beyond the bitterness and the partisanship.”

The President. Yes, yes. That was a hopeful person saying that. And, you know, there were some—

Mr. Scully. Are you less hopeful?

The President. Am I less hopeful now? Well, it didn’t work out the way I was hoping it to—hoping it would. In other words, the tone didn’t—it changed some initially. Remember, we got No Child Left Behind done; we got some—we worked together on PEPFAR. I mean, there were some bipartisan accomplishments. But the rhetoric got very tough. I mean, this is a—some people here in this town use the politics of personal destruction to advance their agenda. I don’t want to sound self-serving, but I haven’t, and I don’t think a President should.

But no, I was hoping for a better tone, and it didn’t happen.

President-Elect Barack Obama

Mr. Scully. So what would you tell President-elect Obama? He’ll have a Democrat in the House and the Senate, like you did in 2001, and he’s talked about trying to unite the country again.

The President. I wish him all the best. I mean, I really do. I hope he succeeds. He may be in a position—maybe he won’t have to deal with quite as contentious as issues as I did, or maybe he will, who knows. He came in with a strong vote, and he’s got good majorities in the House and Senate, and maybe he’ll get some things done.

President’s Faith

Mr. Scully. You’ve talked about your faith. In those quiet moments of prayer, do you want to share what you’re thinking about, what you’re praying for?

The President. Probably not, but I can tell you the effects of prayer have made this a very—my life is joyous, believe it or not; some days happy, some days not happy—every day joyous.

I have been comforted. I pray for a lot of things. I mean, I pray for my—I pray for strength, and I pray for comfort; I pray for friends; I pray for my family’s safety. My relationship with the Almighty is a very personal relationship, as is yours.

The Presidency

Mr. Scully. You are 8 years older. Do you think this job has aged you?

The President. I don’t know, what do you think? I mean, I think I’m wiser, and that I’ve seen a lot more. I know I’m more knowledgeable. My principles haven’t changed. But you tell me, has it aged me? I can’t—I’m not one of these guys that kind of, you know—

President’s Health

Mr. Scully. You’re biking on weekends.

The President. Biking pretty good.

Mr. Scully. You’re physically fit.

The President. Yes, I’m physically fit.

Mr. Scully. Would you say you’re among the healthiest Presidents to serve in this job?

The President. Would I say that? I would think so; I don’t know.

Mr. Scully. So how do you do it?

The President. I just work out and stay—I’m a disciplined person. I work out every day, except for one day, and I make sure my scheduler knows this. Early on in the Presidency I said, “I want time to work out, because I think it’s—I know part of being a—doing this job is to be a disciplined person.” Like, I start meetings on time; I end them on time.

I have got a routine that obviously varies depending on the moment, but a routine that’s pretty well set. You know, I get here early in the morning and meet with the Chief of Staff and the National Security Adviser, then meet with the intelligence people. And pretty much that way throughout my Presidency. And the reason why is, is that I think it’s important for a President to be predictable among the people with whom he works, so that there’s not a—there’s not a sloppiness in the organization.

And anybody can find time to exercise if they put their mind to it.

Importance of Discipline

Mr. Scully. What made you disciplined, though? What in your life created the schedule that you now carry out?

The President. You know, it's an interesting question. I don't really know. I was undisciplined at times. I may have always been slightly disciplined. But, you know, I used to drink too much, which is a sign of being undisciplined. And it took discipline to quit, and maybe a little help from a higher authority. But I wasn't a knee-walking drunk, but I was—you know, I was drinking, and alcohol was beginning to compete for my affections. And so I quit. One night I had too much to drink in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and haven't had a drink since.

So that's discipline as well. I don't know where it comes from; maybe my mom and dad. I haven't sat around and tried to figure it out; I can just tell you it's true.

President's Reading Habits

Mr. Scully. How much time do you spend reading?

The President. A lot. Yes, I'm a avid reader. I don't really watch a lot of TV, in all due respect. Of course, if I did, I'd be watching you. But I read a lot. I read a lot on airplanes; I read a lot upstairs at the White House; I read on the exercise bicycle.

Mr. Scully. What do you take away from books? I mean, how do you translate what you read into how you make decisions or how you go about your business?

The President. Well, sometimes books are just to escape, like mysteries, and it's just a chance to get your mind off the moment. Sometimes I read books to—a lot of history books, and I can take lessons away from the books, like Abraham Lincoln. I just finished a James McPherson book on Abraham Lincoln and his relationship with his generals, which is an interesting topic for a Commander in Chief. One of the lessons of Abraham Lincoln that all Presidents ought to understand, particularly at times of war, is that the President must pay attention to the troops. And Lincoln went out of his way to be with the sergeants and the enlisted personnel as well as the generals. And he—you know, he visited the wounded a lot, and he visited with widows a lot.

And it's a good lesson for any President. And the lesson is, pay attention to your military and work with your military and show your military that you care for them. And you go to a hospital and see these wounded kids and word gets out all across the—you know, all across the system, where—and I've met with a lot of the families of the fallen, which is my duty, but I think the troops appreciate that, that the President cares enough about their comrades' families that he would meet with them. And, yes, it's an interesting experience to do that. The comforter in chief is the person who usually gets comforted.

President Abraham Lincoln

Mr. Scully. You have had a number of events here as we begin to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's bicentennial.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Scully. His picture is here, obviously, his bust in this office. That's one example about the Lincoln Presidency. But what else in the 17 or 18 books that you've read on Lincoln do you take away from what he meant for this office and the country?

The President. Well, he spoke with moral clarity on certain truths. And one basic truth was, all men are created equal under God; 1864, he could have easily have said, well, maybe not all of us are created equal. But Lincoln spoke with certainty. And I think Presidents need to do that, need to speak moral truth, have a set of principles that are inviolate.

Self-pity is a horrible trait, and I'm confident all Presidents have been—have thought about saying, "Oh, why me? Why do I have to carry this burden?" And first of all, I don't believe it is a burden to be President. I don't believe there's—it's not a burden to deal with problems. But Lincoln keeps things in perspective. If you think you got a lousy time, think about what Abraham Lincoln went through. I mean, it was a tough time for Lincoln: 600,000 people died; he lost his son upstairs—Willie died in the White House; his wife was not happy. And yet, he was a man who stuck to principles and stayed strong and died not having any earthly idea of where his standing would be in history.

President's Staff

Mr. Scully. There have been a couple of kiss-and-tell books about your own Presidency.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Scully. My question is, whether it's Scott McClellan or Paul O'Neill or others, does that affect the way a President deals with his Cabinet, his staff, and does that worry you?

The President. It's interesting you said that. That's a very interesting question, because I had staff members walk up to me and say, "How can you trust me?" And the answer is, I just do. I just do. Trust is a very important part of the White House. And the examples you just cited are very rare, very rare. Every President is going to have to deal with that. And it's essential that the President assure the people—and when these books come out, assure the people here that, "I trust you a lot." And I think my words calmed some of the folks I work with down; that they didn't feel alienated.

That's a fascinating question. First person who's asked me that.

The Oval Office

Mr. Scully. In our remaining minute, let me ask you about this office.

The President. Sure.

Mr. Scully. The picture behind you—

The President. That's called, "A Charge To Keep." It's based upon a Methodist hymn called "A Charge To Keep I Have," that was sung when I was first inaugurated Governor of Texas. And my friend O'Neil, Joe I. O'Neil, from Midland, Texas, said, "I got a painting based upon that hymn; would you like to use it?" And I looked at it and said, absolutely. It's by W.H.D. Koerner.

The thing about O'Neil that's important is he introduced me and Laura in his backyard. He and Jan had a little barbeque out there, and there was two other guests, me and Laura. And about 3 months later, we were married.

The importance of that painting is that it's obviously a religious painting. And I tell people the President should never promote a religion. But the President always ought to jealously guard and defend the right for anybody to worship or not worship; that we're all

equal—if we're Hindu, Jew, Muslim; it doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter. The greatness about America is you can choose and worship the way you want to worship.

Resolute Desk

Mr. Scully. And this desk?

The President. Called the Resolute. I entertain people here quite a bit. Recently, youngsters have come in and said, "Hey, where's the hidden drawer?" I said, "What are you talking about?" Well, it turns out the Resolute is famous in "National Treasure," which I have not seen yet. But it's even more famous because Presidents have used it. Roosevelt put the door on there. Out the door John-John Kennedy poked his head in the most famous Oval Office photo. And President Reagan put the bottom there to lift it up.

The desk was given to us by Queen Victoria. The wood is from a ship called the *Resolute*, HMS *Resolute*, that we rescued in the Arctic.

And here's the thing that the desk reminds me of on a regular basis: That the institution of the Presidency is more important than the President; that the office is more important than the individual. And that's important, because whoever is in here will have strengths and weaknesses. And so we will come and go, but because of the institution of stability, the ship of state will sail on. And the job is to make tough calls, and I've had to make some. But the job is also to honor the office.

President's Last Day in Office

Mr. Scully. So finally, you will leave this office the morning of January 20th.

The President. That's right.

Q. What will you be thinking?

The President. I'll be wishing—you know, that's an interesting question. First of all, I'll be wishing President-elect Obama all the best—genuinely be wishing him all the best. And I will have said our final farewells. It turns out that the farewell party for the President stretches over about 45 days, it seems like. I mean, everything is a "last"—last this, last Christmas turkey pardon, last this—not Christmas turkey, Thanksgiving turkey pardon, I mean—

Presidential Transition

Mr. Scully. Is it too long? Is the transition too long?

The President. No, no, no. Actually, I think it's going to be good for me. I'm kind of an emotional guy anyway. I would hate to have the next to last and last day of the Presidency be one giant hug-fest. But we will have packed up, and we will have said good-bye to the folks that we have lived with for 8 years. And it will be emotional in that sense. But I anticipate with great interest watching an historic moment: The swearing in of the 44th President, who happens to be an African American male. And that's a big deal for America. And I will have a front row seat.

Mr. Scully. Mr. President, thank you for your time.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:52 p.m. in Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former Press Secretary Scott McClellan; and former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill.

**Executive Order 13483—
Adjustments of Certain Rates of Pay
December 18, 2008**

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the laws cited herein, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Statutory Pay Systems. The rates of basic pay or salaries of the statutory pay systems (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5302(1)), as adjusted under 5 U.S.C. 5303(a), are set forth on the schedules attached hereto and made a part hereof:

(a) The General Schedule (5 U.S.C. 5332(a)) at Schedule 1;

(b) The Foreign Service Schedule (22 U.S.C. 3963) at Schedule 2; and

(c) The schedules for the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs (38 U.S.C. 7306, 7404; section 301(a) of Public Law 102-40) at Schedule 3.

Sec. 2. Senior Executive Service. The ranges of rates of basic pay for senior executives in the Senior Executive Service, as es-

tablished pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5382, are set forth on Schedule 4 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 3. Certain Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Salaries. The rates of basic pay or salaries for the following offices and positions are set forth on the schedules attached hereto and made a part hereof:

(a) The Executive Schedule (5 U.S.C. 5312-5318) at Schedule 5;

(b) The Vice President (3 U.S.C. 104) and the Congress (2 U.S.C. 31) at Schedule 6; and

(c) Justices and judges (28 U.S.C. 5, 44(d), 135, 252, and 461(a), section 140 of Public Law 97-92, and section 305 of Division D of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008), at Schedule 7.

Sec. 4. Uniformed Services. The rates of monthly basic pay (37 U.S.C. 203(a)) for members of the uniformed services, as adjusted under 37 U.S.C. 1009, and section 601 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110-417, October 14, 2008), and the rate of monthly cadet or midshipman pay (37 U.S.C. 203(c)) are set forth on Schedule 8 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 5. Locality-Based Comparability Payments. (a) Pursuant to section 5304 of title 5, United States Code, and section 142 of the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 110-329, September 30, 2008), locality-based comparability payments shall be paid in accordance with Schedule 9 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

(b) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall take such actions as may be necessary to implement these payments and to publish appropriate notice of such payments in the *Federal Register*.

Sec. 6. Administrative Law Judges. The rates of basic pay for administrative law judges, as adjusted under 5 U.S.C. 5372(b)(4), are set forth on Schedule 10 attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Sec. 7. Effective Dates. Schedule 8 is effective January 1, 2009. The other schedules contained herein are effective on the first day

of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2009.

Sec. 8. Prior Order Superseded. Executive Order 13454 of January 4, 2008, is superseded.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 18, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 22, 2008]

NOTE: This Executive order and its annexes will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 23.

Memorandum on Unexpected Urgent Humanitarian Needs Related to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda

December 18, 2008

Presidential Determination No. 2009-9

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Unexpected Urgent Humanitarian Needs Related to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 2 and 4(a)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (the "Act"), as amended, (22 U.S.C. 2601 and 2603) and section 301 of title 3, United States Code:

(1) I hereby determine, pursuant to section 2(c)(1) of the Act, that it is important to the national interest to furnish assistance under the Act in an amount not to exceed \$6 million from the United States Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, for the purpose of meeting unexpected and urgent refugee and migration needs related to humanitarian needs of Congolese refugees and internally displaced, including by contributions to international, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations and payment of administrative expenses of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration of the Department of State; and

(2) The functions of the President in relation to this memorandum under section 2(d) of the Act, and of establishing terms and conditions under section 2(c)(1) of the Act, are assigned to you, and you may further assign such functions to your subordinates, consistent with applicable law.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Remarks on the American Auto Industry

December 19, 2008

Good morning. For years, America's automakers have faced serious challenges: burdensome costs, a shrinking share of the market, and declining profits. In recent months, the global financial crisis has made these challenges even more severe. Now some U.S. auto executives say that their companies are nearing collapse, and that the only way they can buy time to restructure is with help from the Federal Government.

This is a difficult situation that involves fundamental questions about the proper role of Government. On the one hand, Government has a responsibility not to undermine the private enterprise system. On the other hand, Government has a responsibility to safeguard the broader health and stability of our economy.

Addressing the challenges in the auto industry requires us to balance these two responsibilities. If we were to allow the free market to take its course now, it would almost certainly lead to disorderly bankruptcy and liquidation for the automakers. Under ordinary economic circumstances, I would say this is the price that failed companies must pay, and I would not favor intervening to prevent the automakers from going out of business.

But these are not ordinary circumstances. In the midst of a financial crisis and a recession, allowing the U.S. auto industry to collapse is not a responsible course of action. The question is how we can best give it a chance to succeed. Some argue the wisest

pass—wisest path is to allow the auto companies to reorganize through Chapter 11 provisions of our bankruptcy laws and provide Federal loans to keep them operating while they try to restructure under the supervision of a bankruptcy court. But given the current state of the auto industry and the economy, Chapter 11 is unlikely to work for American automakers at this time.

American consumers understand why: If you hear that a car company is suddenly going into bankruptcy, you worry that parts and servicing will not be available, and you question the value of your warranty. And with consumers hesitant to buy new cars from struggling automakers, it would be more difficult for auto companies to recover.

Additionally, the financial cross—crisis brought the auto companies to the brink of bankruptcy much faster than they could have anticipated. And they have not made the legal and financial preparations necessary to carry out an orderly bankruptcy proceeding that could lead to a successful restructuring.

The convergence of these factors means there is too great a risk that bankruptcy now would lead to a disorderly liquidation of American auto companies. My economic advisers believe that such a collapse would deal an unacceptably painful blow to hard-working Americans far beyond the auto industry. It would worsen a weak job market and exacerbate the financial crisis. It could send our suffering economy into a deeper and longer recession, and it would leave the next President to confront the demise of a major American industry in his first days of office.

A more responsible option is to give the auto companies an incentive to restructure outside of bankruptcy and a brief window in which to do it. And that is why my administration worked with Congress on a bill to provide automakers with loans to stave off bankruptcy while they develop plans for viability. This legislation earned bipartisan support from majorities in both Houses of Congress.

Unfortunately, despite extensive debate and agreement that we should prevent disorderly bankruptcies in the American auto industry, Congress was unable to get a bill to my desk before adjourning this year.

This means the only way to avoid a collapse of the U.S. auto industry is for the executive

branch to step in. The American people want the auto companies to succeed, and so do I. So today I'm announcing that the Federal Government will grant loans to auto companies under conditions similar to those Congress considered last week.

These loans will provide help in two ways. First, they will give automakers 3 months to put in place plans to restructure into viable companies, which we believe they are capable of doing. Second, if restructuring cannot be accomplished outside of bankruptcy, the loans will provide time for companies to make the legal and financial preparations necessary for an orderly Chapter 11 process that offers a better prospect of long-term success and gives consumers confidence that they can continue to buy American cars.

Because Congress failed to make funds available for these loans, the plan I am announcing today will be drawn from the financial rescue package Congress approved earlier this fall. The terms of the loans will require auto companies to demonstrate how they would become viable. They must pay back all their loans to the Government and show that their firms can earn a profit and achieve a positive net worth. This restructuring will require meaningful concessions from all involved in the auto industry—management, labor unions, creditors, bondholders, dealers, and suppliers.

In particular, automakers must meet conditions that experts agree are necessary for long-term viability, including putting their retirement plans on a sustainable footing, persuading bondholders to convert their debt into capital the companies need to address immediate financial shortfalls, and making their compensation competitive with foreign automakers who have major operations in the United States. If a company fails to come up with a viable plan by March 31st, it will be required to repay its Federal loans.

The automakers and unions must understand what is at stake and make hard decisions necessary to reform. These conditions send a clear message to everyone involved in the future of American automakers: The time to make the hard decisions to become viable is now, or the only option will be bankruptcy.

The actions I'm announcing today represent a step that we wish were not necessary. But given the situation, it is the most effective and responsible way to address this challenge facing our Nation. By giving the auto companies a chance to restructure, we will shield the American people from a harsh economic blow at a vulnerable time. And we will give American workers an opportunity to show the world once again they can meet challenges with ingenuity and determination and bounce back from tough times and emerge stronger than before.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President-elect Barack Obama. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Unveiling of the Official Portraits of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush

December 19, 2008

Secretary Clough, thank you for the introduction. Thanks for coming. I suspected there would be a good-size crowd once the word got out about my hanging. *[Laughter]*

It's a tremendous honor to have my portrait added to this gallery's Presidential collection. This is one of only two institutions with portraits of every President, starting with our first, George Washington. That means this exhibit now has an interesting symmetry. It starts with George W. and ends with George W. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the Vice President and Chief Justice for joining us. I thank members of Smithsonian Institute's Board of Regents. I, too, appreciate Marty Sullivan being here. I want to thank members of my Cabinet, administration, and friends.

I am grateful to all the people who made this painting possible. We really appreciate your generosity. I thank the donors for coming today. They remind me of an interesting story about this collection. In 1857, the artist George Healy was commissioned by Congress to paint Presidents John Q. Adams, Van

Buren, Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan. But by the time Healy got to President Buchanan, the Civil War had broken out, and an angry Congress held the former President to blame. And so when Healy presented his bill for Buchanan's portrait, the lawmakers refused to pay. Things are bad when even Congress refuses to spend money. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the artists. Sasha, you had it easy; it does not take much to make Laura look beautiful. *[Laughter]* Anderson had a bigger challenge. *[Laughter]* And therefore, I needed to find a person who would do the painting that would be a good and forgiving friend. And so I want to thank my buddy—my college classmate Bob Anderson for painting this portrait. It actually looks like me, which is a good sign. *[Laughter]* You did a fabulous job.

This is not the first time that Bob has painted me. He had a warm-up; he did my portrait for the Yale Club. Recently, I asked him what was different this time around. He said, well, this time around he had to use a lot more gray. *[Laughter]* I also understood Bob didn't have any difficulty depicting my eyes or my hands, but he had a lot of trouble with my mouth. And I told him, "That makes two of us." *[Laughter]*

A former Washington resident once said: "Whenever you hear about somebody being done in oil in this town, you can't be sure whether that means painting or boiling." *[Laughter]* That was a wise observation from a good and decent man; one who has offered me a lot of wisdom and advice throughout my life. And I am proud to have my portrait in the same room as President 41, George H.W. Bush.

It's a humbling experience to be included here among so many extraordinary leaders. One of the great things about this collection is that visitors can examine the faces of the men who have shaped our Nation's history and study how history has shaped them. In each of their images, we're reminded of the incredible joys and responsibilities that come with the Presidency. Yet in these two centuries of history, we're also reminded that this office and the enduring ideals it represents are greater than any person.

Being the temporary custodian of the office has been a privilege of a lifetime. Over the past 8 years, I have been inspired by the character and courage of our Nation, especially the men and women of our Armed Forces. I have been moved by the compassion of our citizens, from those who mentor a child to those who save lives around the world. Most of all, I've been uplifted by the many Americans who have sent their prayers.

And so, with deep gratitude, I offer my own: For all of you in this room, for the success of our next President and those who follow, and for God's continued blessings on our wonderful Nation.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at the National Portrait Gallery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution G. Wayne Clough; Martin E. Sullivan, Director, National Portrait Gallery; and painter Aleksander "Sasha" Titovets. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included remarks by the First Lady.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

December 19, 2008

President Bush. I'm thinking about the first time I met you—I think it was in Jordan—and I can't help but reflect on how far the process has come to bring peace to the Holy Land.

You have done a lot of important and hard work in helping the region understand the importance of two states living side by side in peace. No question, this is a hard challenge, but nevertheless, people must recognize that we have made a good deal of progress. And a lot of it has to do with your leadership, and I thank you.

I was pleased to note that the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution which confirms that bilateral negotiation—the bilateral negotiation process is irreversible, is—and it's a path to a Palestinian state and a path to peace in the Middle East.

And I've been looking forward to this visit. I'm looking forward to getting a briefing on not only the negotiations, the discussions

you've had with Israel, but also the fine progress that's being made on the West Bank, which is a credit to your leadership and the leadership of the Prime Minister.

So welcome, sir, and thank you for coming.

President Abbas. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And thank you for finding the time to meet with us during these days. There is no doubt that we will always remember the efforts that you have undertaken to promote the peace process. You were the first sitting President who accepted as a policy the establishment of two states—a state of Israel and a state of Palestine—living next to each other in peace and security. And this policy has become a reality in every corner around the world.

And we also remember very fondly, Mr. President, the great efforts that you have undertaken to convene the Annapolis conference after so many years of absent peace process accords. This conference was attended by representatives from more than 50 countries from around the world and made it a reality that the roadmap would be the way to go.

Also the Annapolis conference talked about and promoted the bilateral direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians over the fundamental and basic issues. These basic issues, as we all know, they include Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees, water, security, as well as prisoners. And of course, you pushed very hard for the two sides to carry out their commitments based on phase one of the roadmap and to carry out their responsibilities. And you were clear about both Palestinian commitments as well as Israeli commitments.

On the basis of your efforts and the convening of the Annapolis conference, two other conferences took place—the Paris and the Berlin conferences. And during the Paris conference, there was an agreement in order to support financially, in a very generous way, the Palestinian Authority. After that, we have seen on the grounds that the West Bank was much calmer, and there was performance on security throughout that part of Palestine. And we also appreciate the efforts that were given to us in the area of security, which helped our own security apparatus to carry out their responsibilities.

Also developments took place on issues in the West Bank, such as progress on security, as well as the economic situation, as well as the social conditions.

There is no doubt that we exerted efforts also to promote the peace process under your leadership during the last year; and together we put the fundamental, basic things needed for the peace process. There is no doubt that we will continue these efforts and the peace negotiations. But everything will be based on the foundation, and that foundation was laid by you during your time in office. Because we are committed to the peace process—and this is not a slogan or a rhetorical commitment: We are practically committed to the peace process. And we are confident all these efforts will be transferred to the new administration that will continue to do its part regarding the peace process.

Some might say that all these efforts perhaps went in vain. I happen to disagree. I believe that they have cemented the real principles that carried out the peace process and the negotiations forward. And here I have also to mention the Arab League peace initiative to promote peace, which is actually published today in a number of newspapers, including American newspapers today. And the purpose of this also coincides to cement your vision of two states as well as the principle of land for peace.

We are here today, Mr. President, in order to express our appreciation for your efforts. And we know very well that we would not have been able to go that far in our work without your support and the promotion of the peace process.

I also would like to take the opportunity to thank members of your own administration: Secretary Rice, as well as Mr. Hadley, those people who worked with us tirelessly.

Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. *Shukran jazeelan.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Proclamation 8330—To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and the Generalized System of Preferences

December 19, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Section 506A(a)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(1)), as added by section 111(a) of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (title I of Public Law 106–200) (AGOA), authorizes the President to designate a country listed in section 107 of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3706) as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country if the President determines that the country meets the eligibility requirements set forth in section 104 of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3703) and the eligibility criteria set forth in section 502 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2462).

2. Section 104 of the AGOA authorizes the President to designate a country listed in section 107 of the AGOA as an eligible sub-Saharan African country if the President determines that the country meets certain eligibility requirements.

3. Section 112(c) of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3721(c)), as added by section 6002(a) of the Africa Investment Incentive Act of 2006 (division D, title VI of Public Law 109–432), provides special rules for certain apparel articles imported from lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries.

4. In Proclamation 8157 of June 28, 2007, I designated the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (Mauritania) as an eligible sub-Saharan African country and a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country pursuant to section 104 of the AGOA and section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act and provided that it would be considered a lesser developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 112(c) of the AGOA.

5. Section 506A(a)(3) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(3)) authorizes the President to terminate the designation of a country as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A if he determines that the country is not making continual

progress in meeting the requirements described in section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act.

6. Pursuant to section 506A(a)(3) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that Mauritania is not making continual progress in meeting the requirements described in section 506A(a)(1) of the 1974 Act. Accordingly, I have decided to terminate the designation of Mauritania as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act, effective on January 1, 2009.

7. Pursuant to sections 501 and 502(a) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2461, 2462(a)), the President is authorized to designate countries as beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

8. Pursuant to section 502(a)(1) of the 1974 Act, and having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) (19 U.S.C. 2462(c)), I have determined that the Republic of Kosovo (Kosovo) should be designated as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program.

9. Pursuant to section 502 of the 1974 Act, and having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c), I have determined that the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan) should be designated as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program.

10. Section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including but not limited to section 104 of the AGOA (19 U.S.C. 3703), and title V and section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2461–67, 2483), do proclaim that:

(1) The designation of Mauritania as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country for purposes of section 506A of the 1974 Act is terminated, effective on January 1, 2009.

(2) In order to reflect in the HTS that beginning on January 1, 2009, Mauritania shall no longer be designated as a beneficiary sub-

Saharan African country, general note 16(a) to the HTS is modified by deleting “Islamic Republic of Mauritania” from the list of beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries.

(3) Kosovo is designated as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program.

(4) In order to reflect this designation in the HTS, general note 4(a) to the HTS is modified by adding in alphabetical order “Kosovo,” effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after February 1, 2009.

(5) Azerbaijan is designated as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program.

(6) In order to reflect this designation in the HTS, general note 4(a) to the HTS is modified by adding in alphabetical order “Azerbaijan,” effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after February 1, 2009.

(7) Any provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., December 22, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 23.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Extending Generalized System of Preferences Benefits to Kosovo and Azerbaijan

December 19, 2008

*Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr.
President:)*

In accordance with section 502(f)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the “1974 Act”), I am notifying the Congress of

my intent to add the Republic of Kosovo (Kosovo) and the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan) to the list of beneficiary developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

In Proclamation 8272 of June 30, 2008, I designated Serbia as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program. On February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia. Pursuant to section 502 of the 1974 Act, and having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) of the 1974 Act, and in light of Kosovo's independence from Serbia, I have determined that Kosovo should be designated as a separate GSP beneficiary developing country.

In addition, having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that Azerbaijan should be designated as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

December 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, arriving the following afternoon.

The President declared an emergency in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on December 11 and continuing.

The President declared an emergency in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on December 11 and continuing.

December 14

In the afternoon, at Salam Palace, the President met with President Jalal Talabani and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Prime Minister's palace, where he met with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Later, he participated in an interview with ABC News. He then traveled to Camp Victory.

Later in the evening, the President traveled to Bagram Air Force Base, Afghanistan, arriving the following morning.

December 15

In the morning, the President traveled to the Presidential Palace in Kabul, Afghanistan. Later, President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan awarded him the Ghazi Amir Amanullah Khan Insignia. He then returned to Bagram Air Force Base, where he met with U.S. Special Forces personnel.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared an emergency in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on December 11 and continuing.

December 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority to the White House on December 19.

December 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Carlisle, PA, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, at the U.S. Army War College, the President met with Army

War College students. He then returned to Washington, DC.

December 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Special Envoy to Sudan Richard S. Williamson to discuss the situation in Darfur and the status of the proposed North-South peace agreement.

The President declared an emergency in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on December 11 and continuing.

December 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Grand Foyer, the President participated in a photo opportunity with recipients of the 2007 Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers.

**Nominations
Submitted to the Senate**

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 13

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Massachusetts

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Hampshire

Released December 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino, National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute, USA

Released December 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maine

Fact sheet: Diversifying Our Energy Supply and Confronting Climate Change

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to Washington

Released December 17

Fact sheet: President Bush Has Kept America Safe

Released December 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Released December 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Joel Kaplan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 6859 and S.J. Res. 46

Fact sheet: Financing Assistance To Facilitate the Restructuring of Auto Manufacturers to Attain Financial Viability

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved December 19

H.R. 6859 / Public Law 110–454

To designate the facility of the United States
Postal Service located at 1501 South SlappeyBoulevard in Albany, Georgia, as the “Dr.
Walter Carl Gordon, Jr. Post Office Build-
ing”

S.J. Res. 46 / Public Law 110–455

Ensuring that the compensation and other
emoluments attached to the office of Sec-
retary of State are those which were in effect
on January 1, 2007